

The Charlotte JEWISH NEWS

Celebrating Jewish Life

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Charlotte Jewish Community Mourns the Loss of Leon Levine

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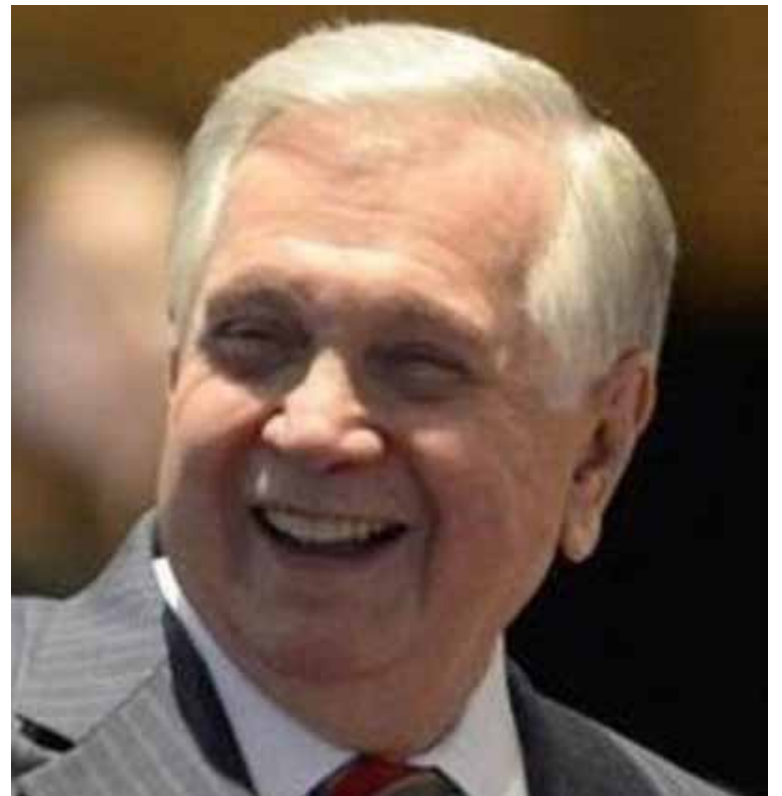
Leon Levine shaped the world in which he was born and raised and prospered. In the process, he took care of his family and took care of his community in many ways, large and small. First, he succeeded in business beyond even his own dreams by a focus on meeting the needs of people, many of whom lived in the margins. The name of the chain of discount stores he founded explains it all: Family Dollar. He wasn't finished. In the second chapter of his life, with the wealth he earned, he gave millions of dollars to the benefit of Carolinians doing their best to overcome

life's struggles, the same decent folks who depended on his store for everyday goods.

Mr. Levine passed away on April 5, 2023, peacefully at home under hospice care, surrounded by family. There is no other one person who has made such an indelible improvement to so many facets of the lives of fellow Charlotteans and Carolinians. The discount store he founded lives on, under new ownership. The charitable foundation that bears his name lives on as well, for there will always be people who need a hand up to a better life. His legacy will endure - that of a small-town kid who, in the grandest meaning of the word, made good. He was 85.

Mr. Levine was born on June 8, 1937, the youngest of Harry and Minnie Levine's four children. Early on he learned the meaning of work. Raised in Rockingham, N.C., 70 miles southeast of Charlotte, Leon's job was to clean out ash from the coal-fed furnace in the basement. A lifetime later, on a trip to Rockingham to celebrate Discovery Place Kids, the children's museum supported by his Foundation, he visited his childhood home. The basement was his first stop.

Leon had to grow up fast. He was 12 when his father died from a heart attack. The Levines owned The Hub, a small department store in downtown Rockingham. With his father gone, Leon headed straight from school to the family business to help. He was being a dutiful son when the road to the future opened before him. Leon, constantly learning and dreaming in business, asked his mother one day if he could take the goods that weren't selling in The Hub and offer them at a discount in the basement. When she said "Yes" Leon was off and running with a business strategy that lasted the



Leon Levine, June 8, 1937 - April 5, 2023

rest of his life. The moral of his story is a lesson for the rest of us. Choose a direction and work like mad. He was 19 when he and his brother, Sherman, purchased a chenille bedspread factory in

nearby Wingate, N.C. By day, Leon attended Wingate College (now University). After class, he made and marketed bedspreads. He at first knew very little about

(Continued on page 2)

Sixteen Jewish Professionals Travel to Chicago To Learn About Israel Education

By Noah Goldman, JFGC Israel & Global Jewry Associate

As part of its Outshine Hate initiative, Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte sponsored 16 Jewish community professionals to attend the iCON conference in Chicago this past March. This biennial gathering is presented by the iCenter, a Chicago-based organization launched in 2008 to transform the field of Israel edu-

cation, complete with curriculum, professional development, and pedagogical theories.

The Charlotte participants included representatives from Charlotte Jewish Preschool, Charlotte Jewish Day School, Hebrew High, Jewish Preschool on Sardis, Levine JCC, Temple Israel, Temple Beth El, Temple Kol Ami, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte. The group

joined hundreds of Jewish educators and professionals of all types, ages and levels of observance to discuss and learn how to teach the complicated and now thornier-than-usual topic of Israel.

Michelle Rusgo, director of art and culture at the LJCC, said "Attending iCon Chicago was an incredible opportunity to build connections with our Charlotte

(Continued on page 6)



Arielle Gorbato
Winner, Grade 8

Please enjoy
The Charlotte Jewish News'
Second Annual
Celebrating Jewish Youth Issue.
Essay Contest Winners on page 12



Daniel Shames,
Winner Grade 11

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Leon Levine

(Continued from front page)

the product, but he knew how to connect with people. This was the start. Leon sold the bedspread company. He had bigger plans.

In 1958, when he was 21, Leon moved to Charlotte in search of opportunity. In 1959, with \$3,000 of his own money and \$3,000 from a partner, he opened his first Family Dollar store in the 1500 block of Central Avenue near The Plaza. He soon opened his second store beside the old Park N' Shop on Wilkinson Boulevard.

At 22, Leon wasn't just a visionary, he was a disrupter. He was changing the way Americans shop, especially the ones who must keep a sharp eye on price tags. Remember, Family Dollar was here first, before big-box megastores like Walmart and Target made discount shopping popular.

From the start, Leon's business instincts paved the way to success. He bought out his partner and opened Family Dollars at breakneck speed, focusing on small towns and neighborhoods ignored by malls and higher-end stores. Each time he opened one, he'd try to make it better than the last. "Polish the stone" he called it.

In 1970, Family Dollar went public and sold stock. In 1974, the offices moved to Matthews, N.C. In 2002, Family Dollar joined the Fortune 500 list of

largest publicly held companies. By the time Leon retired in 2003 to focus on his Foundation, Family Dollar had more than 4,300 stores in 44 states. In this age of business consolidation, Dollar Tree completed the purchase of Family Dollar in 2015. That familiar "Family Dollar" sign still appears often on the horizon under the Dollar Tree umbrella.

Leon was a big-picture guy, yet no detail was too small for him to consider. He knew how to buy merchandise. On business trips to New York, he'd wait until a company's showroom was empty, walk in and say, "I see business is slow, what can I help you with?". When he could he preferred buying from local manufacturers and smaller operators. The men and women in the warehouse and everywhere else he roamed around Family Dollar appreciated that he knew their names and cared enough to visit.

He was a careful steward, often visiting stores unannounced. While driving the South Carolina back roads to his condo at Myrtle Beach, he and his cousin, Lewis, walked into one Family Dollar store. It was empty. No customers. No employees in sight. So, they picked up the cash register, carried it to their car, walked back in and picked out something small to buy. The

look on that manager's face when he went to ring it up wasn't pretty.

At another store, Leon filled up a trash can with merchandise and went to check out. The manager charged him for the trash can but not for the stuff inside. Leon took that trash can (still filled) to the next board meeting to show and tell them what had happened.

His family fondly recalls this same sense of humor around the house. His stories were rich with humor, his antics sometimes surprising. Not everyone knew this side of Leon, but the family surely did.

What inspired Leon to build a business empire, start a charitable foundation, then retire in 2003 to expand that foundation into one of the nation's largest? He saw it as a way to practice tzedakah, a hallmark of his Jewish faith. In Hebrew, it means charitable giving. To Leon, it meant sharing his blessings.

He also saw the Foundation as an extension of Family Dollar, a way to sustain a connection with his customers, to help them, to help the Carolinas, where he was born and raised.

The Foundation was founded in 1980. It took off when Leon retired from Family Dollar Stores in 2003 to devote himself to its charitable work. It has given \$450 million to support organizations large and small across the Carolinas. In a typical year, 400 to 500 grants are awarded, totaling \$35 million a year. Grants focus on four areas – human services, health care, education, and Jewish values.

Imagine the blessings that have come to those who need it most, from a family whose own experiences shape its philanthropy.

The largest gifts have gone to Atrium Health Foundation to launch Levine Children's Hospital, Levine Cancer Institute, Mindy Ellen Levine Behavioral Health Center, and the Sandra and Leon Levine Psychiatry Residency Program. The Foundation has also sought to train the next generation of healers, and keep young people fit. These gifts have included the Levine Sciences Research Center at Duke University, Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine, Levine College of Health Sciences at Wingate University, Leon Levine Hall for Health Sciences

at Appalachian State University, and the beautiful Levine Center for Wellness and Recreation at Queens University of Charlotte.

Many gifts support health and wellness for a reason. His father died from a heart attack when he was 12. Breast cancer took his first wife, the former Barbara Leven, in 1966, eight years into their marriage. She was 27. They lost the youngest of their three children, Mindy, in 1988 at age 25. His wife, Sandra, is a two-time cancer survivor. To help others fighting to outlive cancer and other ailments is a tender part of the Levines' legacy.

Leon was sitting in his doctor's office one day and noticed a Morehead Scholars plaque on the wall, signifying that his doctor, Mike Richardson, had earned the prestigious scholarship to UNC Chapel Hill. "What did that scholarship mean to you?", he asked Mike, closely followed by "How do we start a program like that at UNC Charlotte?" He did just that by funding the Levine Scholars Program, a four-year scholarship for the best and brightest from across the nation to attend UNC Charlotte in program that focuses on leadership and community engagement.

Leon and Sandra enjoyed Charlotte Pops concerts and Broadway shows. They knew how important access to the Arts was for the growth of Charlotte. Their passion for the arts extended beyond buying tickets to the next great performance. Major funding to the Levine Center for the Arts uptown supported the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, Knight Theater and Mint Museum Uptown. The Sandra Levine Theater at Queens University of Charlotte expanded their impact on the Arts further into the community.

In response to the Great Recession of 2008, the Foundation gave nearly \$3 million to the Critical Need Response Fund in Charlotte to help shelter, feed and clothe individuals in need. A \$5 million gift helped establish A Way Home Housing Endowment through Foundation For The Carolinas. It supports rental subsidies and services for homeless and at-risk families.

Over Leon's lifetime, he donated millions to Jewish causes.

In Charlotte, Shalom Park on Providence Road is the center of Jewish life. At the center of Shalom Park is the Sandra and Leon Levine Jewish Community Center. Here is where people of all backgrounds come to learn, deepen their social activism, send their children to camp, exercise, attend social events and more.

Leon was a hands-on philanthropist. He loved learning about these great causes and meeting people who benefited from his giving. He was filled with questions about the work being done in his family's name. He looked for organizations with great leadership, a tract record of measurable impact, and a sustainable path to continue and extend their work.

Among his many recognitions for his work include the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Carolinas Award, the Jack Callaghan Cornerstone Award by Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont, the Inaugural Carolinas Entrepreneur Hall of Fame Award from Queens University, Recipient of the NC Order of the Long Leaf Pine and the Induction into the Order of the Hornet by the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners.

Leon didn't have time for hobbies. He didn't yearn to be the life of the party, though he'd dress up for a charitable gala if it would further the cause. He cherished close friends. He loved keeping up with his 11 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. They called him Papa.

He was one of the original partners of the ownership group which was responsible for bringing the Carolina Panthers to Charlotte. He rarely missed a game in his friends-filled suite and was in person to see both of the Panthers Super Bowl games.

A dinner out was always made better when someone came up to their table to say something along the lines of "My daughter is alive today because of the Levine Children's Hospital" or "I got great care from the nicest people at Levine Cancer Institute". A legacy summed up in a simple thank you from strangers. A small-town youngster established a chain of stores to serve regular folks, then found life's greatest fortune in serving those same good people in the most vital ways he could.

Shabbat Candle Lighting Times

May 5 — 7:54 p.m.
May 12 — 8:00 p.m.
May 19 — 8:05 p.m.
May 26 — 8:10 p.m.

The Charlotte
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Shira Firestone, Editor
Julie Dalli, Proofreader

5007 Providence Road,
Suite 112
Charlotte, NC 28226
(704) 944-6765

www.charlottejewishnews.org
charlottejewishnews@shalomcharlotte.org

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The Charlotte Jewish News
will honor the life and legacy of
Leon Levine with a special
feature in its June/July issue.

Lion of Judah-Pomegranate Society Supports Federation's 2023 Annual Campaign

By Amy Lefkof

On March 30, less than a week before Passover and near the close of Women's History Month, approximately 80 women attended the Lion of Judah-Pomegranate Society Luncheon as part of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte's (JFGC) 2023 Annual Campaign. Presided over by Lynne Sheffer (Lion of Judah chair) and Kara Culp (Pomegranate Society chair), the luncheon celebrated the impact of the Women's Philanthropy division of the Annual Campaign.

Last year Federation raised a record \$5 million, and women's philanthropy accounted for one-third of that campaign, raising close to \$1.6 million; part of that total came from the Lion of Judah-Pomegranate Society, representing women at giving levels of \$1,800 or more (Pomegranate) and \$5,000 or more (Lion of Judah).



Kara Culp, Pomegranate chair

What brought these women philanthropists together at the luncheon was a belief in their collective responsibility to help not only our Charlotte Jewish community, but also Jews around the world.

Attendees were encouraged to support not only the JFGC's approximately 70 beneficiary agencies, but also to support one of the four new community initiatives outlined in the program that are necessary for our community's safety, well-being, and growth: Outshine Hate (combating antisemitism and anti-Israel bias), Strengthening Jewish Identity (providing affordable access to immersive Jewish experiences), Safety and Security (safeguarding our community with training, tools, and resources), and CJE Capital Campaign (modernizing the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library).

The luncheon's speakers fo-



Ana Sazanov speaks about Federation's global impact

cused on Federation impact in three areas: Outshine Hate, Jewish Continuity, and Global Impact. After each presentation, a related question was posed and discussed at each of the 10 tables.

Emily Zimmern and Glenda Bernhardt, co-chairs of the Outshine Hate initiative, explained that to combat the trend of rising antisemitism we must speak up, share facts, and show courage. Zimmern laid out statistics from the Anti-Defamation League: "While Jews are only 2.4% of the U.S. population, more than 55% of religious hate crimes in the U.S. target Jews." In Charlotte and North Carolina there has been a threefold increase. Zimmern explained that antisemitism has an anti-Israel component: "demon[izing] the Jewish state; not just questioning policies, but questioning the right of Israel to exist."

Tools to combat antisemitism include working with greater community partners through training and education, and teaching our own community how to stand up to hate and violence by expressing Jewish identity and values instead of resorting to "self-erasure" to avoid

discomfort.

Bernhardt gave a moving testimonial as to why we must outshine hate: her Jewish identity has informed who she is as a mother, wife, and in her career path. She wants the same for her children: "to live aloud," and "to be proud of their Judaism."

On the topic of Jewish Continuity, Berry Zander and two of her daughters, Rachel Reifkind and Karen Spiegler, explained how their own Jewish identity was cultivated by Jewish education, attending Jewish summer camps, and trips to Israel. Many local agencies that the Federation supports, such as Charlotte Jewish Preschool, CJDS, and PJ Library, foster excitement about a Jewish life.

The final speaker, Ana Sazanov, executive director of the Columbia Jewish Federation (CJF), spoke about the global impact of Federation dollars. Sazanov's slide show began with her as a little girl in Ukraine — her parents didn't tell her she was Jewish because they lived under oppressive circumstances in the USSR. However, after an ad from the Jewish Agency for Israel aired on radio, her family made aliyah to Israel. She went



Lynne Sheffer, Lion of Judah chair

from being a Jewish girl in Israel to working at Emory Hillel and then CJF. When the war broke out in Ukraine, Sazanov helped raise funds to support partner organizations in Ukraine who were some of the first to welcome refugees at the border because of an infrastructure that had been built up over years.

Sazanov went to the Polish/Ukraine border to help refugees, the majority of whom only wanted to return home — which wasn't an option. Her final poignant slide: a violinist playing Hatikvah for Ukrainian refugees on their way to Israel.

Sazanov asked attendees to

do what they could to "fulfill the power of tikkun olam" by helping meet the needs of vulnerable Jews in 70 countries around the world.

The program inspired the women of both societies to, once again, pledge their support to the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte. For more information on how to make your 2023 pledge, visit www.jewishcharlotte.org



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Miss Debby's Best-Loved Children's Books

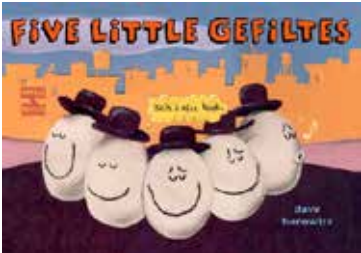
Connecting to Judaism Through Food



By Debby Block

We've all heard the adage about Jewish holidays: "They tried to kill us; we survived; let's eat!" Jewish food is undoubtedly an intrinsic part of Jewish life. Almost every Jewish holiday is associated with the taste and smell of symbolic Jewish foods. Often our childhood memories of wonderful Jewish foods make us feel connected to Judaism throughout our lives. Happily, there are quality children's books that connect these sensory food experiences to Jewish life and to

positive Jewish values. One of the most iconic Jewish foods is the bagel and "Bagels from Benny" by Aubrey Davis is a true classic that should be on every Jewish family's bookshelf. Benny wants to thank God for creating all the ingredients that go into making bagels. One Friday morning, Benny goes to the synagogue and puts a bag of fresh bagels into the Ark with the Torahs. On Shabbat morning, Benny sees the bagels are gone, and he assumes God has eaten the bagels. After weeks of delivering bagels to the ark, Benny and his grandfather discover that an impoverished man in a tattered coat has regularly been taking the bagels. Benny is devastated, but his grandfather helps him to realize that he has been doing a mitzvah, and that was the best thanks that God could ever receive. Recommended for ages 4-8. Perhaps gefilte fish is an acquired taste, but the book "Five Little Gefiltes" by Dave Horowitz immediately jumped its way



into my heart! Based on the traditional children's finger play "5 Little Ducks," Horowitz has created a hilarious Jewish version with gefiltes dressed in bowler hats. The little gefiltes have delightful adventures around the Lower East Side of New York City. But one by one, they do not return home and each time their distressed Yiddish mama yells "Oy vey!" This tongue-in-cheek book is as much fun for parents and grandparents as it is for any preschooler. One of my newly discovered gems is "Mr. Mintz's Blintzes" by Leslie Kimmelman. Mr. Mintz is always doing good deeds, like bringing chicken soup to a neighbor with a cold.

Mr. Mintz is particularly famous for his delicious blintzes. When Mr. Mintz has an accident, right before Shavuot, everyone in the neighborhood, not only takes care of Mr. Mintz but also makes a mountain of delicious apple-cheese blintzes, using Mr. Mintz's recipe. Leslie Kimmelman, who is the author of 36 children's books including "The Rabbi Slurps Spaghetti," "The Shabbat Puppy," and "The Little Red Hen and the Passover Matzah"—has once again created a book that connects kids to Jewish values in a positive and memorable way. Recommended all year round for ages 3-7. If at first you don't succeed; try, try again! Rivka and her modern-day grandmother decide to make challah together, but their first attempt is quite a failure. They keep trying and trying until they successfully bake a delicious challah! In "Bubbie and Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (SoFar!)" by Sarah Lynne Reul, we explore a beautiful Shabbat tradition and discover the bene-

fits of resilience. This intergenerational book may inspire kids to bake challah from the recipe at the back of the book. I recommend "Bubbie and Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (So Far!)" for children ages 3-7, and, don't forget to share the book with your bubbie. For the perfect combination of food and fiction, I recommend

(Continued on page 5)



Levine-Sklut Judaic Library CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

The proposed facility updates and space modernization re-envision the library's key functions to create a user-centric and modern environment that better supports 21st century learning needs and modalities. These changes would put the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library on par with the redeveloped libraries throughout our Mecklenburg County system.



Sue's Bookshelf



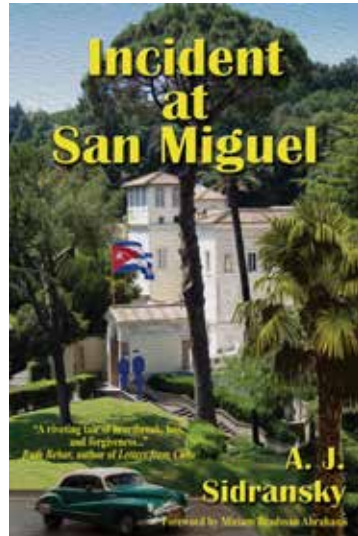
By Sue Littauer

"Incident at San Miguel," by A.J. Sidransky is based on the true story of Miriam Bradman Abrahams and her family who, like so many Jewish refugees, emigrated from Poland to Cuba. The Jewish community was tightly connected there, but when the Cuban revolution occurred in December 1958, things changed and many Jewish families knew they had to leave Cuba to make a better life for themselves and their children.

Abrahams explained, "I related my story to author A.J. Sidransky, whose books I re-

viewed for the Jewish Book Council. As a fluent Spanish speaker with connections to the Dominican Republic and a grandson of refugees himself, I knew he could connect emotionally to my story. As a fiction writer, he could fill in the gap of so many missing years with his creative touch. He melded some of the facts of my family's time in Cuba and the difficulty of their emigration with purely fictional events and people.

"Incident at San Miguel" is the story of two brothers who find themselves on opposite sides of Castro's revolution. Aaron and Moises Cohan share a name and a Jewish heritage, but little else. Aaron is a lawyer and an official in Batista's government. Moises is a communist rebel and supporter of Castro. The rift between the two brothers runs deep and severs not only their relationship but their relationship with their beloved parents as well. Both brothers quickly learn that no one in their world can be trusted, and at the point where Aaron seeks to leave the country with his family, I was



hooked on his story.

"Families seeking to immigrate to the United States would pack their suitcases for a week or so and tell their family members, employees, and friends they were going on vacation, to return within a designated period of time. At the airport they would be questioned, the father often taken into a separate office to be harshly interrogated. In the

case of Aaron, he was presented with an impossible choice based on a false charge.

"To understand the situation more fully, I spoke with the daughter of a Cuban refugee family who immigrated to Charlotte. She said that her grandfather realized they had to leave Cuba when Castro started taking over the educational system. Like Aaron, when her parents and their three children were at the airport, her dad was suddenly taken into a private office and was interrogated by officials with machine guns – they finally said his wife and children could leave but he couldn't. Her mother said she wasn't leaving without her husband, and luckily an important government official and former classmate of hers at Havana University entered the airport, recognized her, and let them leave."

As I did, those reading "Incident at San Miguel" will learn

much about the history and culture of the Jewish community of Cuba. "Incident at San Miguel" will be published on May 19, 2023.

A.J. Sidransky is the author of "The Interpreter," an unforgettable work of historical fiction; and the award-winning Forgiving Series, "Forgiving Maximo Rothman," "Forgiving Mariela Camacho," and "Forgiving Stephen Redmond." In each of these works of historical fiction; romance, mystery, Jewish history, and culture are woven throughout.

The works of A.J. Sidransky can be found at the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library at the Center for Jewish Education.

Editor's Note: The April 2023 CJN incorrectly stated that the book "Exodus," by Leon Uris, was published in 1982. The book was first released in 1958 and sold over 5 million copies.



Miss Debby

(Continued from page 4)

"Jewish Fairy Tale Feasts: A Literary Cookbook." This collection of Jewish folk tales is a collaboration of the award-winning Jane Yolen—who has written or edited over 350 books—and her daughter Heidi Stemple. The classic Yiddish tales and the recipes go hand-in-hand to excite readers and budding chefs about related Jewish values. Some of the child-friendly recipes included in "Jewish Fairy Tale Feasts"

are latkes, challah, matzo brei, noodle kugel, and cheesecake. Recommended for ages 7-12.

All these best-loved books and many more terrific books and cookbooks are waiting for you and your children at the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library. Please visit us today or contact us to reserve a copy! (704) 944-6783 or library@jewishcharlotte.org.

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Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte

iCON

(Continued from front page)

partners, Jewish educators from around the world, and with the place our Jewish identity began, Israel. I am in awe of the sessions I attended and I learned how the extraordinary truly exists in Israel's day-to-day living. Israel is an amazing place rich with diversity and culture, and I am excited to share what I have learned with our Charlotte community."

The focus of iCON is less on teaching facts and figures and more on broader concepts and ways of thinking about Israel. The three-day gathering comprises dozens of sessions on topics like Israeli television, Jewish-Arab relationships, the Hebrew language, Israeli comics, poetry, and music. Its unique framework is founded on two principals: first, that Israel education is integral to Jewish education and identity; and second, that excellent Israel education must be grounded in excellent education.

"The iCenter conference opened my eyes to an inspired world of Israel education in which we embrace opportunities to teach and learn about complexity and nuance with a focus on helping students gain understanding," shares Jona-



Front Row: Emily Greenberg (Charlotte Jewish Preschool), Allie Redder (Temple Kol Tikvah) Second Row: Ericka Rahman (Jewish Preschool on Sardis), Donna deGroot (Charlotte Jewish Day School) Third Row: Beth Nichols (Temple Beth El), Rabbi Helene Kornsgold (Temple Israel), Julie Rizzo (Levine JCC), Michelle Rusgo (Levine JCC), Megan Harkavy (Hebrew High), Becca Green (Charlotte Jewish Preschool), Beverly Wakefield (Charlotte Jewish Preschool) Back Row: Noah Goldman (Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte), Jenna Owens (Charlotte Jewish Preschool), Jonathan Friedman (Temple Beth El), Alan Johnathan (Temple Israel), Chad Schaeffer (Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte)

than Friedman, COO at Temple Beth El. "Thanks to Federation, we were able to travel to iCON with a Charlotte delegation representing a cross-section of our entire community, all of whom left inspired to create a collaborative approach to this work going forward."

While there were dozens of sessions on a wide variety of topics, Charlotte participants shared that the time spent between the formal aspects of the gathering – the sideline conversations, the chats by the coffee urn – were extremely valuable as they provided

an opportunity for participants to interact with fellow professionals whom they don't get to work with often, or with people from around the country they would never otherwise meet.

"As the community convenor, Federation is uniquely positioned to facilitate these types of gatherings and conversations," says Tair Giudice, chief impact officer for Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte. "We have a valuable role in bringing the various organizations together to address challenges facing our Jewish community." Federation's

investment in this Charlotte cohort of professionals is part of its concerted effort to intensify the quality and scope of what is offered in the Jewish community of Greater Charlotte in the realm of Israel education and engagement. The challenges of doing so are made greater by current attempts to delegitimize Israel and the alarming rise of antisemitism. To address these challenges, Federation launched its community-wide initiative Outshine Hate in April 2021. "We know that engagement with Israel plays a significant role in one's Jewish identity," explains Giudice. "With that in mind, Federation is committed to equipping and motivating our community's institutional leaders and educators to create innovative access points towards a diverse, real, and sophisticated understanding of Israel and its many roles in Jewish life." Providing this professional development opportunity

for our Charlotte community's professionals is just one piece of Federation's multi-pronged framework implemented as part of its Outshine Hate initiative. Another piece of this framework includes partnering with Israel-Now, to offer a highly subsidized, week-long Israel trip for eighth graders. "That way, when our community's teens begin high school, they've already had one experience with Israel," continues Giudice, "and they understand where Israel lives in their lives and identities."

Federation looks forward to continuing its work with the iCenter and the Charlotte cohort in creating a communal landscape that deepens people's relationships with the people, land, and State of Israel. For more information or to get involved with Federation's Outshine Hate initiative visit jewishcharlotte.org.



Charlotte delegation working with iCenter staff Israel education

Thank You

LEGACY DONORS



The following individuals/families are in the Book of Life Society and have granted us permission to share with you that the Levine Jewish Community Center has been included as a beneficiary of their legacy gift.

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Revitalized Art & Culture Department at JCC Welcomes New Director, Coordinator

By LJCC Staff

The Art & Culture department at the Levine JCC (LJCC) has recently undergone an exciting transformation with a new director, Michelle Rusgo. Michelle brings fresh ideas, a new perspective, and a renewed energy to the department. The department, which focuses on promoting art and culture within the organization and the wider community, has been revitalized by the new leadership and is set to expand its reach and impact.

Michelle Rusgo brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the role. She graduated from The School of Visual Arts in NYC and was an art teacher for many years before coming to the LJCC. With a strong background in art and a passion for promoting cultural understanding and appreciation, Michelle is the perfect fit for the department. Although she started just a few months ago, she has already implemented several new initiatives aimed at increasing engagement with art and culture within the organization and beyond.

In addition to a new director, the LJCC has hired Randi Seffinger as the Art & Culture

coordinator. Randi is a relative newcomer to Charlotte, having moved here from northern New Jersey less than two years ago. In New Jersey, she was the co-owner of Buzz Theater, which specializes in black box musical theater productions. She has produced, directed, taught, costumed, and performed throughout the northeast and Charlotte areas, most recently teaching and directing for Matthews Playhouse.

Together Michelle and Randi have big plans for the Art & Culture department. The department organizes cultural events such as music concerts, art exhibitions, and film screenings. It also provides the community a space to showcase its performing arts talents. The team is planning theatrical shows, performing arts classes, musical performances, art exhibits, and workshops. They are also working on a series of collaborations with local artists and cultural institutions. These partnerships will provide opportunities for the larger community to engage with the local art scene including both the work of emerging and established artists.



Randi Seffinger and Michelle Rusgo

Currently, Michelle and Randi are preparing for this summer's Performing Arts Camp for second through eighth graders. Within the themes of "Dare to Dream" and "Me, Myself and I," the campers will experience a wide range of arts opportunities including dance, theatre, visual arts, and technology, culminating in a performance at the end of each session. In addition, a podcast studio/media room has

been added to the Performing Arts Camp this year. The studio will be available to middle school-aged campers, with camp counselors providing guidance and support to help them create podcasts and videos that are engaging, informative, and fun. Campers will be given assignments on a range of topics and encouraged to express their creativity and share their unique perspectives of the world.

With its commitment to providing campers with the tools and resources they need to succeed in the world of performing arts, the camp is helping to shape the next generation of creative thinkers and innovators.

Michelle is excited about the potential of the department to make a real impact on the culture of the organization and the wider community. "Art and culture are essential to understanding and appreciating the world around us," she says. "I believe that by promoting these values within the LJCC and beyond, we can create a more engaged and connected community."

The department has already received a great deal of support from the organization and the wider community, and Michelle is confident that it will continue to grow and thrive in the upcoming years. "I'm excited to see what we can achieve together."



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Rabbi Oppenheim Speaks to Charlotte Rotary Club About Antisemitism

Rabbi Chanach Oppenheim, director of Charlotte Torah Center, recently spoke to a full house at the March meeting of the Rotary Club of Charlotte on the topic of antisemitism.

Rabbi Oppenheim emphasized that antisemitism is different from other forms of hatred against a people, in part because of its irrationality. He shared revealing facts and figures with the group, including the ratio of hate crimes against Jews compared with other groups. The world today, he stated, contains approximately 15 million Jews, representing less than 0.2% of the world's population, and yet according to the 2015 report by the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, there are more religious hate crimes against Jews (71%) than against other all other religions combined. He went on to explore the reasons that are often cited for hating Jews, highlighting again the irrationality of the popular tropes such as Jews' control of all the money and resources. Time and time again, he asserted, it is Jews who have been striked asserted he asserted of their money and power, but this has done nothing to diminish antisemitism.

The invitation to speak to the Rotary Club is significant as it highlights the growing concern in the non-Jewish community in the wake of increasing incidents of hate crimes against Jews. Edwin Peacock, former city councilman and incoming Charlotte Rotary Club president, explained

why they felt it was important to have Rabbi Oppenheim address the group. "Central to all Rotarians globally is something known as the Four Way Test. The first question: 'Is it the truth?' This was the central topic we wanted to address. What is the truth about antisemitism? Its roots? Its causes? And, more importantly, what can we all do to prevent and stop its continuance?"

Rabbi Oppenheim answered that last question with the response, "Education." He expounded in a separate communication, "It's incredibly significant that a non-Jewish humanitarian organization requested a talk on antisemitism. These civic minded leaders realize that Jew hatred is like an infection that poses harm to us all. We Jews have been in the fight for many years, but it is a welcome breath of fresh air to have such a prominent group align with our fight and struggle because as committed as many members of the community are in fighting Jew hatred, we can't do it alone. The most important way to combat Jew hatred is to educate people about it. But not just about how bad it is, but it's just as important to let people know how much good we have brought to the world. Peace, fair justice, and charity are just a few of the contributions we brought to the world, ideals unknown in the Greek and Roman empires, the two civilizations on which the entire Western world bases their values."

Rabbi Oppenheim's presentation had the desired effect. Andy Dinkin, Rotary Club member said, "I had a 30-year club member tell me it was the most important speech she's heard at our club. More importantly, as

a result of the program, Rabbi Oppenheim has been invited to speak on antisemitism at the Realtors Association, and other Rotary Clubs are in touch about having him talk to them. The ongoing opportunities to educate

will be impactful"

As the disturbing upwards trend in incidents of antisemitism continues, it remains important for all of us to stand up and speak up and embrace these opportunities to educate others.

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Celebrating Jewish Youth

Student to Student Program Aims To Stop Antisemitism Before It Begins

By Mary Eshet

It is easy to become distressed about increasing trends of antisemitism, but difficult to answer the question, what can we do? For high school students Rosie Smolowitz and Max Harr, the Student to Student program offers a way for them to take action. The program, now offered by the Stan Greenspon Holocaust and Social Justice Education Center in Charlotte, equips Jewish high school students to share information about their culture and traditions with other students. This program is part of Be the Narrative, an organization based in St. Louis.

"As the great-grandchild of Holocaust survivors, it is very important to me to do anything I can to help combat antisemitism," said Max, a sophomore at Providence High School. "My Judaism is a part of my daily life and I have always talked to my non-Jewish friends about my traditions. Recently I realized that in doing so, I may have a positive impact. Student to Student has given me the chance to do so in a more formal manner, reaching many more peers."

Student to Student was created in 1992 by the St. Louis Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), which expanded the program to other cities during the 2017-2018 school year. In 2022, the JCRC spun off the program and an independent, national organization was created: Be the Narrative. The CEO is Rabbi Andrew Terkel and Student to Student is currently its primary program.

On February 23, Fawn Chapel, the national Student to Student program director, traveled from St. Louis to lead a training session for Jewish teen participants at the Greenspon Center on the Queens University campus. Student to Student is now live in 12 cities, and Fawn says presenters have gained leadership skills, strengthened their Jewish identity, and acquired tools for dealing with antisemitism through the program. Each time they present, they are demystifying Judaism for more young people, and hopefully helping to stop antisemitism before it begins.

On Friday, March 17, Rosie and Max shared the inaugural Student to Student presentation in Charlotte with seventh and eighth graders at Rea Farms STEAM Academy. Rosie and Max were expecting an audience of about 30 students, but seemed totally unfazed to learn there would be 140, crammed together on bleachers in the gym!

They laid their props out on a table: a Torah scroll, mezuzah, yarmulke, seder plate, shofar, dreidel, and chanukiah. They



Max Harr demonstrates blowing the shofar as he and Rosie Smolowitz share Jewish culture and traditions with Rea Farms STEAM Academy students.

also exhibited the very heavy tome, "Every Single One was Someone," which comprises 1,250 pages of the word "Jew" printed 6,000,000 times to represent those who died in the Holocaust.

The two covered immense ground in a fast-paced 45 minutes. They explained the three branches of Judaism, life cycle events of a bris/naming ceremony, b'nei mitzvah, marriage, and death. They described Shabbat, and were a huge hit with the students as they passed out challah rolls to everyone and encouraged them to say Shabbat shalom to each other.

Max elaborated on his bar mitzvah, which had to occur virtually during COVID. He noted that he read from the Torah in Hebrew, and Rosie explained the Hebrew language uses different letters and is read from right to left. She asked if anyone wanted her to write their name in Hebrew. It seemed they all did, and she demonstrated with a few

on the flip chart.

Rosie and Max did not shy away from difficult topics. They talked about the Holocaust and shared personal experiences with antisemitism. Max told the students he had heard his peers refer to Judaism as a "cult." Rosie talked about a time in her life when she hid her Jewish identity, ceasing to wear her Star of David necklace except at Jewish events.

Kashrut was the next topic, and Max shared that cheeseburgers are off the menu for those following Kosher diets. Rosie drew various kosher symbols on a flip chart.

With respect to the Jewish holidays, students were most familiar with Chanukah, but came away with information about Passover and the seder. Max demonstrated blowing the shofar for Rosh Hashanah.

After the prepared presentation, the students asked questions until time ran out. They were curious about where the nearest temple is, how often Jews pray,

the impact of the Holocaust on them, what the dreidel was for, why Jews wear a yarmulke, what Jews believe about the afterlife, and why mirrors are covered during shiva.

As the presentation ended, Max, Rosie, and the staff handed out Oreos to the students, pointing out the kosher symbol on the package.

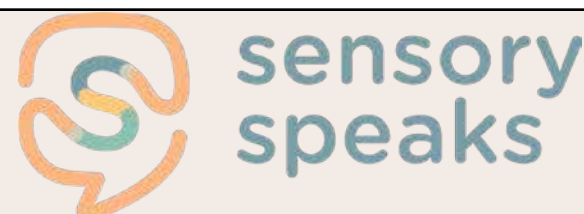
One teacher remarked, "I

watched my Jewish students during this presentation and they were just beaming with pride."

"I will definitely do this again," said Rosie, a junior at Myers Park High School. "I was surprised at how attentively the students listened to the presentation. I really like doing this for middle schoolers and having the chance to help stop antisemitism before they get to high school."

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Celebrating Jewish Youth

Charlotte Jewish News Celebrating Jewish Youth Essay Contest

For our second annual Celebrating Jewish Youth issue of The Charlotte Jewish News, we wanted to hear what was on the minds of our youth, so we put out a call to students in 8th-12th grade for essays related to their personal experiences with antisemitism. It was both chilling and enlightening to read the submissions. Below are the unedited winning essays for the 8th-10th grade and 11th & 12th grade categories.

Antisemitism, a Young Person's Perspective



By Arielle Gorbato, Grade 8

I've always been aware of antisemitism's existence. Ever since I was four, I have listened to my grandparents recite their memories of Nazi-occupied Europe with tears in my eyes. Yet, I never thought that it would reach me. The concept seemed so distant, growing up in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood and attending an Orthodox yeshiva. My Jewish identity had seemed so innocent then, pure and untouched by the vile hatred that would soon taint it. I lived without the shadows of fear and un-

certainly creeping up in the periphery of my eyes. Today, being just thirteen, my life has already been irrevocably changed by the maws of antisemitism.

For me, it started in 2020, fifth grade, the beautiful curtains of naivety were thrust open as I entered the world of social media only to find myself submerged in an unnavigable labyrinth of merciless hatred. At first, I thought what I had seen was an isolated incident, but I would soon learn that antisemitism had unrelentingly sunk its teeth into the media and was pumping its poison like a blackened heart sewed from malice. As I explored Jewish media and saw the sheer amount of contempt that plagued it, apprehension began to claw through my consciousness, though I hastily pushed it to the back of my mind.

May 2021 — an outbreak of violence in Israel, an outbreak of violence on the internet, millions of posts, and thousands of hate crimes were all hitting too close with people attacked minutes away from my home and endless disturbing trend-

ing hashtags engulfing Twitter: #Hitlerwasright, #Jewishterrorists, #Hitlerthegreat. It was terrifying to walk the streets seeing protestors screaming and bold graffiti splattered against the asphalt seemingly screaming at me, "The Jews have become the Nazis they once feared." From there, the sweetness of the safe haven that I called home began to rot. June 1st, 2021 — a fifth-grade student at the elementary school I had attended walked into school dressed head to toe in an SS uniform wielding an essay on Hitler's great achievements and that infamous mustache painted on his face.

In September, I returned to school post-COVID and began venturing into NYC once again. Consequently, I ceased to adorn my Mogen David each morning. What I once believed to be inconceivable very quickly evolved into a nightmarish reality. Even in a Jewish neighborhood, whispers were still audible. An altercation at school could result in shouts of "KIKE!" The streets and subways of Manhattan lay blanketed by swastikas and

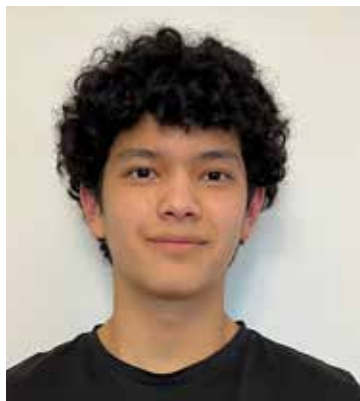
slurs. While all undeniably vile, in hindsight, these instances felt subtle. I had witnessed them, internalized them, and yet I still believed myself to be removed from them. After all, they had never been directed toward me specifically, not yet.

July 2022 - I move to Charlotte. The atmosphere surrounding my being Jewish appeared to entirely change. Whereas I previously had the support of a multitude of Jewish students and community members I felt no such thing here. The whispers of Jew-hatred suddenly transformed into full-fledged screams: "Kanye was right," "I'll Jew him down," "Hey, [Anne Frank]," "Come here, Jew," and "Heil Hitler!" As my fellow human beings spout hatred and my peers draw swastikas on their arms as they march down the halls, I question whether I should hide who I am. A classmate asks, "What did you get on the test?" "97%," I reply. "Oh, well that's because you're a Jew," they retort. It is in these heartstopping moments that I begin to wonder if being a proud Jew is still safe.

Nowadays, I'm almost reluctant to share my Jewish identity, cautious of the consequences. I say almost because I won't let the hostile prejudice of others shame me into hiding who I am. This is how it all started 84 years ago, with lies, bigotry, stereotypes, but more importantly, with fear. Over thirty members of my family were unjustly murdered by a discriminatory regime that promoted the very same behavior that is not only prevalent in the world today, but in schools, in children. For three years I've watched idly and helplessly as antisemitism has festered through numerous communities. Heinous animosity towards Jews has no place in a country that preaches freedom of religion.

Arielle is thirteen years old and a student in the eighth grade. She cherishes any time that she can spend with my family. Arielle loves learning history, becoming absorbed in her writing, and spending countless hours reading.

My Experience With Antisemitism and Racism



By Daniel Shames, Grade 11

Antisemitism and racism are two forms of discrimination that have plagued society for centuries. These forms of prejudice have had devastating consequences, leading to violence, hatred, and inequality. Being both Jewish and Chinese presents a unique challenge as these groups have been subjected to both forms of discrimination throughout history.

Antisemitism is the hatred or discrimination against Jewish people. It has been present throughout history, with exam-

ples dating back to ancient times such as 1290 when the entire Jewish population of England was kicked out as a result of orders from King Edward I. Jews have been persecuted, expelled from their homes, and subjected to violence and discrimination for centuries. During World War II, the Holocaust saw the systematic murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime. Today, antisemitism continues to exist in various forms, such as hate crimes, vandalism, and discriminatory policies. Racism, on the other hand, is discrimination against people based on their race or ethnicity. It is a pervasive problem that has led to inequality and social injustice. Chinese people have faced racism throughout history, particularly in the United States. In the 19th century, Chinese immigrants were subjected to discrimination, violence, and exclusionary policies, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act which prohibited Chinese immigrants from entering the US. Today, Chinese Americans still

face racism, particularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of anti-Asian sentiment.

Being both Jewish and Chinese presents a unique challenge. I have experienced both forms of discrimination simultaneously, which can lead to a sense of isolation and alienation. I sometimes feel as if I do not fully belong to either community, or face rejection from both groups. Sometimes these forms of discrimination are not as transparent as you see on the news or TV but they happen in little waves or very subtly. Being a double minority, it is easy for many people to have something to make fun of me for. As far as my Chinese side, it is not as socially unacceptable to call us slurs like it is for African Americans so people get away with calling me nasty names like "chink" and "gook". This form of racism happens on a weekly basis and it has definitely changed the way that I act around other people and even my friends. I have to watch what I say in fear of being bullied for

something I cannot control. Usually, I just shrug off the attack but at times it makes me very angry and I want to do something back. I know that in the long run that would just prompt more of that behavior and we would be at a loss/loss situation. Antisemitism is more frowned upon, as a result that type of discrimination occurs in a more bleak way. Most antisemitic comments I receive are because people do not know that I am Jewish so they say things in passing and don't think a word of it. I can remember many times where I heard people saying terrible things about Jewish people or making fun of the Holocaust. When I was younger, I thought that if I just did not tell people I was Jewish, they would stay away and not have anything else to make fun of me for. I was ashamed to hide something so important to me from the rest of the world just because I was scared. Eventually people started to find out about my Jewish affiliations and I would be made fun of in and out of school as well as

online. People called me things like a "dirty Jew" and would just laugh in my face about my own religion. With all forms of discrimination, I believe it is in my best interest not to fight back so I am not put into a worse situation than I am already in. Looking back at my previous actions, I do not believe that I would have done anything differently. I definitely could have been more assertive and upright with myself but I do not believe my final actions would change. The world should always be choosing kindness to stop all forms of hate that exist in the modern era.

Daniel Shames is a junior at Fort Mill High School. His favorite subjects are Biology and the sciences. He dreams of one day becoming a doctor so that he can help people in need. Daniel is currently a member of Temple Emanuel in Gastonia, NC, and helps out with projects around the synagogue. He lives with his mom, dad, and cat named Fluffy.

Celebrating Jewish Youth

Hebrew High's Rosh Hodesh Program Has Taught Me How I Fit In



By Lillie Auslander

I used to not know my place in Judaism. I never knew who I was and how I fit in but thanks to the Rosh Hodesh program, I now know who I am. It teaches me how women fit into our society. It teaches me Jewish views on normal everyday activities.

Rosh Hodesh is offered once a month on Sunday through Hebrew High, but also happens in several other communities nationwide. It was created by a national organization called Moving Traditions. Taken from their website, Moving Traditions “emboldens Jewish youth to thrive through the pursuit of personal wellbeing (shleimut), caring relationships (hesed), and a Jewish and feminist vision of equity and justice (tzedek). Combining positive psychology with Jewish values, we partner with Jewish institutions across North America to engage Jewish teens, families, and communities. Moving Traditions’ innovative programs provide safe spaces for youth to connect and grow, providing a circle of support for Jewish

teens.” The teen groups that Moving Traditions has created are gender-based Rosh Hodesh (girls) and Shevet (boys). They also offer Tzelem, a group for LGBTQ+, nonbinary, and gender expansive teens.

In Rosh Hodesh, we explore topics such as self-expression, self-image, mental health, and relationships. Rosh Hodesh is a place where I know I can be myself and be honest and open. It is a great group of girls who are all of similar ages and go through the same things as each other. We also have an amazing leader. Megan Harkavy, facilitator of the group and director of Hebrew High, makes sure we feel safe and comfortable in each program.

When we meet once a month, we learn about a topic in our lives and typically get to do a hands-on project related to what we are doing while learning how to connect this to our everyday Jewish lives. Some of my favorite lessons so far have been about stress management, friendships, relationships, and self-image.



This year's Rosh Hodesh group: Mylene Frankl, Dori Braverman, Rachel Schwartz, Evie Salam, Maddie Courtemanche, Syrna Gose, and Lillie Auslander.

Being a part of this wonderful program has given me a place where I feel like I belong. Every time I go, I am greeted with a smile and the environment is so positive.

The program is so uplifting and positive and is all about you. Yes, we are sometimes split into groups and learn as a group but everything we do can be related

to you and your life. The group is very diverse and we all come from different backgrounds, but we have one thing in common and that's the fact we are all Jewish teens trying to navigate through life. I have learned so much about myself and the other teens in the program.

In Rosh Hodesh, you make instant friendships and connections

and know that no matter what, you will always have someone or a group there to support you. I have gone to sessions while I'm at my lows and someone is always there for me with a smile and an ear to listen, but I have also gone on my highs and they are all ready to congratulate me and support me.

You learn so much about yourself and your culture in this program, so if you are considering joining, I 100% recommend it. I was unsure at first if I would like it and now, I'm in my second year and every year I ask my mom to sign me up as soon as registration opens.

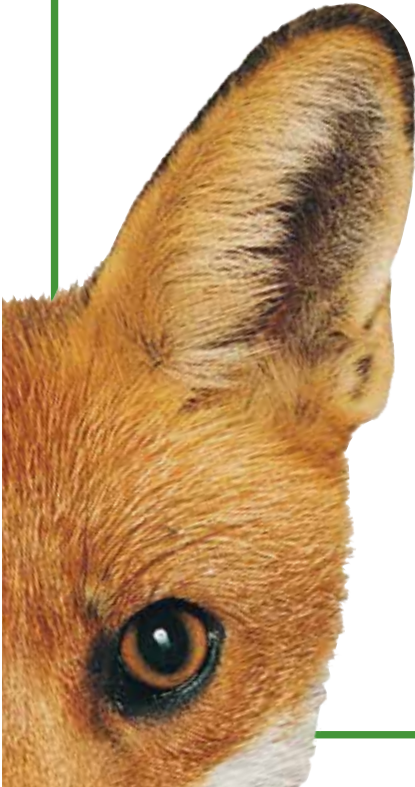
To learn more about this great program, please contact Megan Harkavy at mharkavy@hebrew-high.org.

Lillie Auslander is a 15 year-old freshman at Cuthbertson High School. She has a service dog named Shadow. In her free time she loves to play music and paint. Lillie is in marching band as a mallet player and competes with her school's winterguard.

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Celebrating Jewish Youth

Charlotte Jewish Day School Sixth Grade Goes to Washington



The sixth-grade class at Charlotte Jewish Day School spent four days touring Washington D.C. as part of their sixth-grade curriculum. The trip was packed from the moment the plane landed. The itinerary included the Planet Word Museum, a night tour of the National Mall and the 10 monuments all lit up, the Air and Space Museum, the National Archives, the Portrait Gallery, a tour of the Capitol, The International Spy Museum, the Museum of Natural History, and the National Zoo.

The most meaningful reflections are those from the students and teachers who led the trip:

It was amazing how many things we could fit in. Every day we would go, go, go and then fall asleep when we got back to the Airbnb. I liked the International Spy Museum because we could see how spies worked around the world and hid their identities. We had our own challenges with our own identity, special card and code.

Mendel Levin

My favorite thing about the trip was going to the White House. I thought it was going to be much bigger!

Emily Vining

The Capital was really cool and interesting. We joined with another group and saw so many statues of people who use to work there. We saw things from all of the states and statues from North Carolina. Seeing all of the monuments at night was great. I also liked the things from the Museum of Natural History. We saw a lot of old things like mummies.

David Waizman

I liked the Spy Museum. Each one of us got a card and for special activities it was very interactive. The tour of The Capitol was interesting. We saw three rooms where many things from history took place. We also saw the Rotunda. There was a lot of history.

Ariel Goldshmid



Sholom Dov Ber Cohen, Alexa Geller, Ariel Goldshmid, Mendel Levin, Ava Manuel, Ben Osovski, David Waizman, and Emily Vining

The trip demonstrates how lucky our kids are and the amazing things you can do at a small school. From the Airbnb to the food, to all of the incredible activities we were able to do in a short time.

Lindsay Kennedy, 6th grade teacher





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Celebrating Jewish Youth

Spotlight on CJDS Newspaper Class Journalists

By Barbara Foxx
What a thrill to once again be a part of Charlotte Jewish News' Celebrating Jewish Youth Edition! As editor-in-chief of Charlotte Jewish Day School's student newspaper, I'm happy to share selections from two of my journalists, fifth graders and twins, Levi and Sofia Garrison. Levi and Sofia are contributing articles from our Jewish Living section, and I hope it gives you a glimpse into the magic that happens at CJDS each and every day! Charlotte Jewish Day School is a vibrant, growing learning community rooted in an educational philosophy that motivates, challenges, and celebrates the whole child and is united by our shared love for and connection to Judaism.

Rosh Chodesh the Monthly Holiday



By Sofia Garrison
Every month, Charlotte Jewish Day School students get to enjoy a Rosh Chodesh assembly. For those of you who don't know what Rosh Chodesh is, it's the first day of the Jewish month.
Last month, we split into groups and sang Tefilah. You could feel a strong sense of unity and connection through our school.
We celebrated the joyful arrival of Adar and the coming of Purim. We cut out and colored paper people then made them into electrical circuits with an LED light on the figure's heart representing

their neshama (soul).
We did this activity because it was a way to show how we all have the same neshama despite how we might look. This message was chosen because in the Purim story, despite the fact that Esther was a queen, she was still the same, humble Hadassah in her heart.
Mr. Isham, our STEAM teacher, designed the paper people circuits and while the project was going on he passed out 3D printing certificates to three lucky people! The certificates were given to fifth graders Leo, Jillian and Elaiy for being excellent leaders.
The assembly was so much fun. I am sure everyone there would agree, so I am so excited to see what next month's celebration will be.



Hamantaschen, Games, Stories, Purim!



By Levi Garrison
Did you know that on March 7, 2023 it was Purim? You might ask what is Purim? Purim took place about 3000 years ago and it was when an evil man named Haman made a decree that all Jews should be killed. But Queen Esther, who was secretly a Jew, saved us all from Haman. So we eat hamantaschen to celebrate our victory. Hamantaschen are shaped like Haman's hat and ears, like a triangle. Also we celebrate v'nahafoch hu, which means flip upside down. In the Purim story, a lot was flipped upside down

or was swapped. (You can see an example of v'nahafoch posters in Morah Yiska's classroom.)
This year CJDS Purim theme was "countries around the world" because it was Hakhel. Hakhel is when a lot of Jews from all over the world come to the Beit Hamikdash to listen to a king. My classmate, Graham, and I dressed up like we were from Mexico. We had a big sombrero, mustache, poncho, and glasses.
Each student presented their costumes to the entire school, stating a fact about their costume. Some of my favorite costumes were Ben and Emery's, who dressed like they were from Jamaica. They wore dreadlocks and were dressed in green, yellow and black (the colors of Jamaica's flag). I also loved Ryan's costume. He was dressed like he was from Australia. That meant he had a boomerang, cowboy hat, vest, and tan pants.
Afterwards, it was time to listen to the entire Megillah. Because it was so long, if you were follow-

ing along nicely, you would get Mike and Ikes candies as a little reward. After the Megillah, we made mishloach manot for others. Our art teacher, Ms. Lerner, taught us now to make our own mishloach manot bags out of t-shirts that had different countries printed upon them. In keeping with our theme, the items we put in the bags were foods from all over the world including (French) croissants, (Italian) pizza bites, (Israel) hamantaschen, (Mexican) chili lime chips, known as Takis, (Australian) fairy bread, (Dutch) stroopwafels, and oranges.
Then we all went back to Gorelick Hall and had a delicious lunch including hot dogs in "blankets" with beans and yummy hamantaschen for dessert. My favorite flavors of hamantaschen are chocolate and strawberry. We enjoyed singing Purim songs together and the entire school benched together in harmony.
I had so much fun on Purim, how about you?

ב"ה

JPS wishes Mazel Tov to the graduating class of 2023!





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Celebrating Jewish Youth

Friendship Circle: A Teen Friend's Perspective

We are always trying to find ways to describe our unique approach to supporting friendships between children and teens with special needs, "Special Friends," and typically developing teens, "Teen Friends," from our community. The following is a speech written by Emily Kosofsky, one of our Teen Friends, which captures the essence of our program and reminds us all about the value of acceptance and inclusion in our world.

Hi my name is Emily Kosofsky, and I'm a junior at Myers Park High School. I've had the wonderful privilege of being part of Friendship Circle for more than four years. My experiences at Friendship Circle changed how I interacted with people who I thought I didn't have anything in common with. I stopped seeing the difference in others and learned that most people are just looking for friendships and a connection with another person. My friends here have taught me that a connection is always available as long as you are genuine and willing to see the goodness in others. One Sunday at Friendship Circle, I sat at a table doing

arts and crafts with a group of friends. One of the kids started to lose control of her emotions, and instead of totally freaking out, she asked for help. At that point, a few people jumped in and were supportive and helped her recover and get back to the activity. The thing that really struck me was that no one even noticed. How awesome it would be if we all could just freak out when we need to, have people support us and then get back to what we were doing. If only the whole world could be like a Friendship Circle. One of my best friends is nonverbal, and I have been hanging out with her every week for about a year. I have enjoyed our time together. I have learned so much from our relationship, and I knew in order to be a better friend, I needed to find a better way to communicate with her. I created a poster board with all our favorite activities. We use that every time we hang out, and it allows her to pick what she wants to do when we're together. It has made our friendship so much stronger. It taught me that I have to be more aware of my friend's needs so

that I can get the most out of my relationships.

For my whole life, just like some of you, I've struggled to fit in, whether in school or social settings. I think most teenagers have the same challenge, just trying to be like everybody else. Friendship Circle has given me a place where I can just be me. Every Wednesday and Sunday, I

go to Friendship Circle, and no matter what's going on in my life. When I walk in the door I'm met with smiles and kindness. I know that everyone around me cares and values my friendship

as much as I value theirs. I'm so grateful that I have this wonderful community as part of my life.



Help Us Help Them! Volunteer This Summer With the Shalom Park Freedom School

By Annie Lord and Margaret Musa

Each summer, we invite children from our temples' partner schools (Temple Israel/Huntingtowne Farms Elementary and Temple Beth El/Sterling Elementary) to Shalom Park. The children participate in a six-week literacy and enrichment program that works with elementary school students at risk for summer learning loss. This summer's program runs from June 20 thru July 27. We can't run this program without your help!

Thanks to the generosity of individual donors and the Shalom Park partner agencies; Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, Temple Beth El, Temple Israel, Levine JCC, and Foundation of Shalom Park; the funds have been raised to sponsor this program for another summer. Now, it is time to welcome the scholars to our home at Shalom Park!

Fulfill the mitzvot of hachnasat orchim (welcoming guests) and tikkun olam (repairing the world) by joining the Shalom



Shalom Park Freedom School reader with scholar

Park Freedom School and volunteering with the scholars. Volunteer opportunities include:

- Reading time, from 11:20-11:50 each day, when volunteers are needed to serve as reading buddies (especially for the first, second, and third-grade students)
- Providing food for family nights (June 27 and July 11). It's as easy as dropping off food by the Levine JCC front desk, but, of course, you are welcome to join us for the evening if you are

able!

- Leading or helping with enrichment activities (art projects, games, science, music, etc.)
- Serving on the planning committee

Please check out the Shalom Park Freedom School website in early May for the volunteer positions that are available. Click on the GET INVOLVED tab. Volunteers can sign up through the Shalom Park Freedom School website: www.spfreedomschool.org/get-involved/. If you are interested in serving on the planning committee or leading an enrichment activity, please contact Margaret Musa at mmusa@carolina.rr.com or Annie Lord at anniehlord@gmail.com.



Emily Kosofsky at Friendship Circle with her Special Friend

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Shalom Park Freedom School scholar and volunteer



Celebrating Jewish Youth

Youth Spotlight: Young Entrepreneur's Business Cleans Up

By Abby Sherman

Every weekend, Tyler Goldstein, a 7th grader at Marvin Ridge Middle School, and his brother, Brian Goldstein, a senior at Marvin Ridge High School, wash cars as a small business. Tyler started the business about two-and-a-half years ago. Now, at the age of 14, he has a very successful business, sometimes washing up to 100 cars each month and setting aside money for college. Tyler's very proud of his business and works very diligently every weekend. He makes sure every car he cleans is cleaned properly. He loves washing cars because for him it's very therapeutic and relaxing. He's always in the sunshine and washing cars takes his mind off the stressful things in his life, like school. I got the opportunity to interview Tyler to learn more about how his car wash works.

Abby Sherman: What gave you the idea to start the car wash?

Tyler Goldstein: My brother needed a car and my dad gave his car to him. But my dad wanted to get his car (my brother's now) and my mom's car detailed. He wanted to get it cleaned, and he

wanted to get it cleaned right. So I was talking to the guy that came to my house to detail the car. I was asking him how this works. How does he go around, dealing with people, what does he do, and what does he use to clean the car. Then I looked into it, and it was really interesting to me. I wanted to see how I could do something similar to what he did. That's how I got the idea, and then I tried it.

AS: Explain to me your car wash process.

TG: My brother and I have a process. If we're both working on the inside of a car, he would start on the vacuuming, and I would start on the leather and vinyl treatment. I make sure to clean out all the tiny crevices in the car. Then I wipe everything down, clean, and treat things if they need to be. Once we finish that, we wash out the outside of the car and detail the outside. My brother normally does the roofs and I do the body. Then we go over the car with a small brush to make sure we have everything clean and spotless. After that, we dry off the car and get ready to wax it. Once we wax it and get

all the wax off, we go back and triple check to make sure we didn't miss anything.

AS: How many cars do you wash each month on average?

TG: During the school year, we can only wash cars on the weekends, so we wash between seven and ten cars each month. But in the summer, on average we wash more than 100 cars each month. Sometimes we can't wash as many cars because it can be very exhausting.

AS: What advice would you give someone who wanted to start a car wash or another small business of their own?

TG: You want to make sure you have all the materials and that you have everything that you need to do a good job on the car or in another business. You also want to make sure that everything that you're using works properly. Make sure that you have enough time between jobs and that you're always up and ready to go. Ask other, more experienced people for advice or help before you start your business, so you do everything right. Always give 110% effort in whatever you're doing. Always



Tyler Goldstein

double-check what you've done to make sure you don't miss anything. It's important to make sure that you're always nice, polite, and honest to the people you're working for. Finally, always have a positive attitude and think positively.

What I learned from interviewing Tyler is that to get somewhere in life, you have to have good work ethics and determination. Tyler works non-stop on his car wash; it's his passion. He cre-

ated it through good work habits and perseverance, even when the going was tough. In the words of playwright Eliza Anderson, "If you want something, if you truly want something, you must set your sights, remain steadfast in your purpose, and work." This is definitely something Tyler holds himself by, and we should all too.





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Celebrating Jewish Youth

Gastonia Jewish Teen Selected for Prestigious Bronfman Fellowship

By Rochelle Rickoff Wilensky

Daniel Shames, an 11th grader from McAdenville, North Carolina, and member of Temple Emanuel of Gastonia, was recently selected as a 2023-2024 Bronfman Fellow. The prestigious Bronfman Fellowship grants 26 Jewish high school juniors from around the US and Canada with a free six-week Israel summer program followed by a year-long US cohort program. Bronfman Fellows routinely hail from large metropolitan areas in the US and Canada; Daniel is the first Bronfman fellow ever selected from rural North Carolina.

The Bronfman Fellowship is a transformative experience for a pluralistic group of intellectually adventurous young people who want to see the world through a lens broader than their own. Inspired by a diverse faculty of rabbis and educators, the Bronfman Fellows explore the rich tapestry of Jewish texts and ideas, using them to spark conversations, engage with stimu-



Daniel Shames

lating existential questions, and achieve a deeper understanding of themselves and one another. They also expand their perspectives through intensive encounters with a parallel group of Israeli peers. The fellowship year includes an all-expenses paid summer in Israel followed by a year-long program in the US. After the fellowship year, fellows join an extraordinarily

active, 1400+ member alumni community. Past Bronfman Fellows have gone on to become Rhodes Scholars, Schwarzman Scholars, Supreme Court clerks, Fulbright Scholars, Wexner Fellows, and Dorot Fellows.

Morah Rochelle Wilensky, religious school director at Temple Emanuel, encouraged all of her 11th grade youth group students to apply for this year's Fellowship. Daniel took up this challenge with multiple rounds of essays and interviews, while Morah Rochelle wrote a recommendation letter for him. After committing a lot of time and hard work to the process over a period of months, Daniel, his family, and religious school/temple community were overjoyed to learn that Daniel had been selected as a 2023-2024 Bronfman Fellow.

Morah Rochelle is not surprised that Daniel was selected. Having known Daniel for five years as his teacher and bar mitzvah tutor, Daniel has always shown a keen interest

in Judaism and Jewish history, paired with a strong academic drive. He is interested and comfortable in diverse cultures, viewpoints, and backgrounds including his mother's Chinese culture and his father's Jewish faith. Daniel is a true mensch who displays natural leadership skills among his peers with a quiet, calm demeanor. Temple Emanuel is thrilled that Daniel will be able to experience this unique opportunity throughout his senior year of high school.

Mazel Tov Daniel from Morah Rochelle, Temple Emanuel Religious School, and the entire Temple Emanuel community: We are so, so proud of you and wish you a fantastic summer in Israel and fellowship year ahead.

Temple Emanuel and Temple Emanuel Religious School welcome all kinds of Jewish families to its community, with families from Gastonia; McAdenville, Bessemer City; Belmont; Shelby; Lake Wylie/Clover SC; and more surround-

ing towns. If you are nearby and interested in joining our wonderful community, please reach out!

Children and teens of all ages are welcome to our religious school, with older teens active in our youth group. Interfaith and diverse families, and children/teens with no prior religious school education, are ALL welcome!

For more information: Temple Emanuel of Gastonia - <https://te gastonia.urjweb-1.org/>
The Bronfman Fellowship - <https://br onfman.org/>



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Celebrating Jewish Youth

It's Not the Place, It's the People: Temple Kol Ami Teen Brings Home Valuable Lessons From Israel

By Bonnie Shaw

For this month's "Celebrating Jewish Youth," issue of The Charlotte Jewish News, Temple Kol Ami has no problem celebrating and highlighting its youth. Our congregation is full of outstanding young congregants who exemplify all that is good in the world. We have nationally ranked martial artists, a world champion percussionist, a young pilot, competitive dancers, actresses, swimmers, set designers, musicians, cross-country stars, video game masters, and so many more outstanding young people. The list goes on and on. We are incredibly proud of all their accomplishments. More so, we are proud of who they are as young Jews and of how they represent our faith and congregation. Their kindness supersedes their accomplishments and that is what we are most proud of. Every time a new child walks into the world of Temple Kol Ami, that child is greeted with a warmth that is unlike any other. So, how was I going to choose one to spotlight? How was I going to represent all that we wanted Temple Kol Ami to be for the next generation of Jewish leaders? Then I spoke with Will Lyons and I knew ...

Will had the opportunity this past February to travel to Israel as an eighth grader to be part of the IsraelNow program sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte. The name of the organization tells us exactly who they are. Go to Israel now, why wait? Their website tells us that every IsraelNow trip is an educational program designed to give eighth graders an immersive, emotional, and memorable taste of Israel and their Jewish heritage through a week-long, hands-on experience. The goal for participants to return home inspired to further their Jewish involvement in the community through continued engagement in Jewish learning experiences and activities.

Speaking with Will, I discovered that for him this experience was more than just an opportunity to visit Israel and see the beautiful country. It had sparked something inside of him that he was not aware of. Will has always been an outstanding member of our congregation who would always be there to support a friend or help when needed. This trip though, took his natural kindness and amplified something inside of him. When I asked Will what his favorite part of the trip was, he did not answer with Tel Aviv, Masada, the Western Wall, or any other sites that he visited. He answered, "It was the people that I met." Will was moved by the Israeli soldier who spoke five



Will Lyons experiencing Israel with IsraelNow

languages. He was impressed by the kindness of the people at the hotels.

However, it was one of the 27 ministers, who are part of Israel's government, that really struck a chord with Will. This minister did not speak any English, yet he learned his speech in English so that he could share his knowledge with this group of eighth graders. As Will was telling me these stories, none of this surprised me. It is people that change us and affect us. A place, no matter how beautiful, holds the people who dwell there. What a beautiful thing to discover at 14. I asked Will if he felt changed when he returned. His answer was quite profound. He said "Ms. Bonnie, at first it did not, I went to sleep, I unpacked, went to track practice - nothing new. But slowly I have seen a change in myself. I pray now. I am more content." Those words struck me and they will forever be part of my experience with Will. His trip to Israel where he experienced beautiful sites and had meaningful experiences was summed up in his words. "I pray

now ... I am more content." This shows how powerful our experiences with others are. What he discovered at the age of 14 will no doubt change the trajectory of his life. Will spoke with me about wanting to attend high school in Israel for his senior year and how he for sure was going to do a

semester in Israel in college. In a short trip Will was able to discover more about who he is and who he wants to become. I hope that this short story of one young man's experience inspires others to take steps that help them discover more about themselves. We can ask for nothing more.



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How Holocaust Education Can Be a Pathway Out of the Ghetto



By Albertia Burgess

In the ghetto where I grew up, we lived under the absolute worst conditions. Violence and murders were not uncommon, a general disregard for higher education was pervasive, and we hoped for the best instead of planning for the future.

In such an environment, I did not learn self-advocacy, the value of education, or the skills to be gainfully employed. Because I hated this culture, I adopted a different one - one that valued the thing that is the most likely pathway out of poverty: education.

I became an English teacher, and, after a few years, found myself educating students in the poorest areas of West Charlotte. Like me, many of these students grew up in communities that were impoverished not only in material things but also in neighborhood values that could protect them from gangs, drugs, and alcohol.

While looking for new teaching material, I stumbled upon the graphic novel "Maus" by Art Spiegelman. I watched a documentary featuring the trip to the Auschwitz death camp by Elie

Wiesel and Oprah Winfrey. At this time, I was introduced to the North Carolina Council on the Holocaust and its programs that focus on bullying, hate, bigotry, and antisemitism and the history of the Holocaust. I went to teacher workshops and was selected to go on a bus trip to the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

In each Holocaust survivor tale I watched, read, or listened to, I saw my own communities. I saw people I love forced to live in conditions that were unsafe, crowded, and, often, unsanitary. Akin to Jews being forced to live in ghettos because of antisemitism, my people had been ghettoized because of systemic racism.

At the Holocaust Museum, I watched images of Nazi troops and collaborators dragging brothers and fathers away, never to be seen again. I watched images of others, the Righteous Gentiles, hiding Jews in their homes. I saw abuse, desperation, and despair. Although the texts and various media were teaching me about antisemitism in Nazi Germany, I was able to relate those lessons



Albertia Burgess

to my own upbringing and those of my students.

Within a week, I was teaching the Holocaust fervently. I was searching for materials and opportunities to learn more. I needed to be able to show my students what happened to the Jewish people and why. I needed to talk about what can happen when you turn a blind eye to maltreatment and inhumanity — not only when young black men are treated unfairly by police, but when your neighbors in

the ghetto embrace a violent lifestyle instead of building a caring community. I wanted my students to see just how much people will abuse their power if you let them. I wanted to talk about what ghettos represent and why we should never be proud of such a thing.

My classes created drawings, made dioramas, and even created a song. We investigated and researched the Holocaust, and my students were able to relate too many of the horrific occurrences of the Holocaust to current events in our own neighborhoods. There was nothing to glorify or laugh about. Just a lot of sadness.

I will admit, I teach the Holocaust, in part, to scare them. I'd rather scare them with what "could happen" if they are not vigilant, informed, and active. When they say to me, "That could never happen here," I remind them that many Jews thought the same during various stages of the Holocaust and that the world we live in today is still filled with maltreatment, prejudice, and inhumanity.

I've heard Kanye West and many other public figures dis-

respectfully utilize the language unique to the Holocaust. That is why we must continue to teach what happened during the Holocaust. We must ensure the narrative is accurate and our scholars are decoding the information correctly.

We cannot allow this event or the language thereof to be redefined. The Holocaust happened. Although we cannot change this historical event, we can certainly teach it and try to prevent it from happening again.

As all survivors say, what's most important is to "teach the children."

Albertia Burgess is a post-secondary English and digital literacy instructor and secondary language arts educator with a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in legal research who specializes in literacy support, community engagement, and increasing equity in underserved areas. She currently is teaching the 8th grade at Onslow Visual Secondary School. She is also a Holocaust fellow selected by the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC.



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Religious Life

Temple Solel Builds Community Culture Through Social Action

By Dale Rivers, Temple Solel VP

I believe the three main reasons most people choose a temple are location, comfort with the services, and a sense of community with the other congregants.

Temple Solel is a small but growing congregation located in Fort Mill, an area south of Charlotte that is growing quickly. We are very convenient for the rising Jewish population in Fort Mill and York County.

Our services are led by Russ Cobe, our lay leader, and the spiritual heart of our loving and welcoming congregation. His warmth and compassion are evident in the religious services he conducts, and his musicianship greatly adds to everyone's enjoyment.

However, this is an article about one of the unique ways that we are building Temple Solel's sense of community. We are emerging from COVID with an energy and passion to get everyone back together. We are again offering live services, but we are also getting our members together as a community, interacting with each other, and feeling especially good about each other. We are expanding our social outreach efforts.

Across the road from Temple Solel is a project run by several churches in Fort Mill and Lake Wylie called Community Café. Every Friday a free lunch is provided to anyone who comes through the door. About 80 lunches are provided, and anyone can get additional takeout lunches for themselves or for friends unable to come. There is also a free grocery store supplied by several local restaurants, grocers, and other donors. About



"Team Solel" volunteers make lunches for Community Café

120 additional meals are created and loaded into the Community Café food truck to be delivered to several sites throughout Fort Mill later that day.

In February, we began to assemble a team for Temple Solel to help at Community Café. Many of our members were ready to re-emerge into society and do some hands-on good, so we showed up with a larger team than we had originally promised. We separated groceries, set up tables, prepared and served lunches, and filled takeout orders. Everyone on our team agreed they wanted to come back. They felt good about what they were doing and they felt good about each other. We were developing a family culture of lending a hand. The following month we had even more volunteers, so our initial success led to more success.

Next, we put a Temple Solel team together to volunteer one evening at the Bethel Men's Shelter in Rock Hill. The shelter provides a place to sleep and

three meals for homeless men. They do this every day. Our team worked with other volunteers to provide and serve a full supper for about 70 men. Our part was to provide some of the meal, plus desserts. Since volunteering at the Bethel Men's Shelter followed our big Purim Party the night before, there was no problem having more than enough desserts, and again, we had more volunteers than we expected. Now we are planning to serve dinner at the Bethel Men's Shelter once a month on a continuing basis. Our growing volunteer team is now large enough to do this and everyone is excited about the prospect.

We are finding that going out and "getting our hands dirty" as someone called it, is having a profound effect on how some of our congregants think about each other and how much closer we feel to the Temple Solel family. We are getting to know each other better, doing some real good in the community at large, and feeling good about ourselves. Not all our members have the time or ability to do this kind of volunteering, but the fellowship that is being generated rubs off on everyone. Some of our regular volunteers are not even regular Friday night attendees, but they want to help, and being part of our Temple provides an easy way for them to do this. This hands-on culture we are building is continuing to grow. We are looking into other projects we can support.

If this sounds like a Jewish temple you might find attractive, you might want to come by and meet us. Temple Solel offers the opportunity to Pray Together, Learn Together, and Do Together. We welcome the presence, enthusiasm, talents, and involvement of all members and guests. We grow with friendship, learning, doing good, and having fun. We are a Reform Jewish congregation that has eliminated the barrier of annual membership dues. While we gladly accept



Working the grill

donations, active participation is much more important. We meet at 7 p.m. on the second and fourth Friday of every month at the Grace Presbyterian Church at 2955 W. Highway 160 in Fort Mill. For more information about our services and other events, please visit <https://templesolelsc.org> or call (803) 610-1707. We'd love to meet you.



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Religious Life

Welcome Rachel Glazer, Assistant Director of Youth Education and Engagement



Rachel Glazer

By Andy Harkavy

We are excited to welcome Rachel Glazer to our team as the assistant director of youth education and engagement. Rachel's experience, combined with her enthusiasm for joining the Temple Beth El team, has allowed us to think bigger about how we will engage children and teens. Rachel joins us after working for over six years at the Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) in Jackson, Mississippi, most

recently as the assistant director of education. In her role at the ISJL, Rachel helped direct a team of educators that supports congregational education programs across the South. Rachel coordinated some of the ISJL's community outreach programs, including a secular literacy program for elementary school students. Rachel also served as the religious school administrator at Beth Israel Congregation in Jackson. She received her BS

from the University of North Georgia in psychology and is currently completing a master's degree in Jewish experiential education from George Washington University. Rachel's first order of business at Temple Beth El will be getting to know our teen community to help teens shape their own Jewish lives. Rachel will support teen programming at Temple Beth El, including advising our senior youth group, LIBERTY, as well as helping connect teens with the multitude of Jewish opportunities across Charlotte and beyond. Rachel will also play a key role in our efforts to build community among all our Temple Beth El children. She will partner with our education committee and parents to facilitate more community-building and social opportunities for children and their families. Rachel's years at the ISJL, as well as her current graduate studies, will help to enrich the experience of our religious school staff and students. Rachel will collaborate with Rabbi Nichols to develop new curriculum and support the staff in creating wel-

coming and engaging learning environments for our children. **Tell us about your journey to Charlotte and Temple Beth El.** Back in the fall, Rabbi Knight reached out to see if anyone in my network of southern Jewish educators might be interested in joining the team to head up the youth group. I didn't know of anyone available at the time, but the more we talked about it with Rabbi Nichols, the more it became clear that this role was just about as perfect as could be for my next chapter. Plus, my partner, Sam, has family in Charlotte, and after visiting in December, we knew that this was a community we wanted to call home. In short, it was besheret (meant to be)! **What drew you to working at Temple Beth El?** I first visited TBE when I was a unit programmer at URJ Camp Coleman in 2014. Our Chalutzim unit (10th graders) had the opportunity to tour Shalom Park, volunteer with the Freedom School, and add to the Butterfly Garden. I was intrigued by the vibrant and intentional Jewish life of this congregation and

made a mental bookmark to find a community like it once I was a "real adult." Now, I get to do one better—I get to work at the place that has been my mental model for my ideal congregation for the past decade! When I visited in December, everyone was so warm, kind, and smart, but spending time with the teens really sealed the deal for me. I lost count of how many students walked up and introduced themselves to me, unprompted. Their hospitality and comradery really stood out and pointed toward how this community values welcoming newcomers and finding ways to make their talents shine. I'm so excited to get to build programs with such incredible youth, families, and staff! **What is your favorite part of being a Jewish educator? Why?** Creating meaningful experiences with kids that inform their understanding Judaism and what their Jewish life can look like is at the core of it all. We have the unique opportunity to connect our subject matter to students'

(Continued on page 23)

SHABBAT EVENING

HONORING

Cantor Mary Rebecca Thomas

05.19.23

5:00pm Preneg
6:00pm Service
7:30pm Dinner*

*Registration Required

Sponsorship opportunities are available. To learn more, contact Jonathan Friedman at jfriedman@templebethel.org

A circular portrait of Cantor Mary Rebecca Thomas, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue top, smiling. The portrait is set against a background of concentric circles and a blue and orange geometric design.

Religious Life

Rachel Glazer

(Continued from page 22)

everyday lives in real ways they can explore and customize. I love helping students ask Big Questions, explore their personal practice in nontraditional ways, get out of their heads and into their hearts (prayerfully) and hands (practically), so they can experience Judaism with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their might!

What do you enjoy doing when you are with family and friends?

Every chance we get, I try to find an experience for us to enjoy together, whether it's exploring a new park, wandering through a street fair, enjoying a delicious meal at a local spot, or moseying through a museum. I never turn down an outing to a thrift store, salvage shop, or yard sale.

As my mom says, it's not about what you find, but the thrill of the hunt!

What is your favorite hobby?

I am eternally a theatre kid, so any chance to perform improv, direct a play, or lead a workshop, I am there. The most sustainable way I've found to keep my thespian heart thriving is through Zumba — I'm a licensed instructor and have loved learning dances from around the world that tell all sorts of stories and provide heart-pumping freedom of expression that gets me out of my head and into the real world for an hour or so!

What is your most memorable moment?

As young as the fourth grade, my home congregation's lay

leader would invite me onto the bima to help song-lead our tiny group's Shabbat services. This taught me early on that you don't have to be a rabbi to have a spiritual impact on your community, and that everyone, no matter how young, has something important to contribute to our collective Jewish experience. Before I ever learned to read Hebrew or write a d'var Torah or lead a program, he helped me find my Jewish voice through song.

If you could have dinner with any person living or deceased, who would it be, and why?

I'd like to host a dinner party with Shari Lewis and Lamb Chop, who provided some of the first representations of Jewish life I watched on VHS as a kid;

N.K. Jemisin, who crafts brilliant Afro-futurist sci-fi dystopias that beautifully invite the reader to confront the shortcomings of our own reality; Mary Shelley, who led a wild life and would make a fascinating book club member, or at the very least a great trick-or-treating buddy; and my great-grandmother Fannie, who was a spitfire Appalachian healer and farmer with a love for orange cats named Yellowdock.

What is something about you that TBE congregants might not know?

One of my passions is literacy education—we are a People of the Book, after all! From co-creating and running a spring break literacy day camp to serving on the board of Mississippi's only

books-to-prisoners organization, I am a firm believer in the power of stories to transform us. I can't wait to write my next chapter with y'all!

Anything else?

I'll be at URJ Camp Coleman all summer running the visual arts programming in the Minsky and look forward to getting creative with our youth who will be there! As Ms. Frizzle says, "Take chances, make mistakes, and get messy!"



Reflections on a Year at Temple Beth El: Embracing Chesed



By Jonathan Friedman, Temple Beth El, COO

As I reminisce about my first year as the chief operating officer of Temple Beth El, I'm reminded of a core Jewish value that beautifully shines through our congregation: chesed, or loving-kindness. This guiding principle is interwoven into our community's fabric, making my first year in this role truly meaningful.

Upon my arrival at Temple Beth El, I was immediately captivated by the congregation's warmth. After enduring several challenging years, I found that our congregation showed immense joy in reuniting. A memorable moment from last year's High Holy Days illustrates the power of chesed in action. A newcomer attended Rosh Hashanah services for the first time, and by the end of the day, had received an invitation to join several families to break the fast on Yom Kippur. This genuine act of kindness, free from obligation, exemplifies the generous spirit that makes our community so strong and welcoming.

Chesed is a cornerstone of all our endeavors, from our dedicated staff who work tirelessly to create an inclusive environment to our Board of Directors, whose

thoughtful guidance shapes our congregation's future to all who show up with smiles, hugs, and open hearts.

As we look ahead, it's essential to recognize the importance of nurturing chesed to unlock the full potential of our Temple Beth El community. By actively practicing loving-kindness, we strengthen the bonds between us, foster a familiar and comfortable atmosphere, and create a shared support network. In other words, as we often say at Temple Beth El, we share life's "oys and joys."

In my first year at Temple Beth El, I've been humbled by the abundant chesed that permeates our congregation. This loving-kindness binds us together,

providing a solid foundation for growth and resilience. By engaging with one another, we co-create a sacred space where every act of kindness and connection helps us build and improve our lives, our community, and the world. Together, we are shaping a bright future.

To our entire community, thank you for welcoming me into this incredible congregation and granting me the privilege of serving you in this capacity. As we embark on the next chapter of our journey, let us continue to embrace chesed, fostering a nurturing and vibrant environment for generations to come.

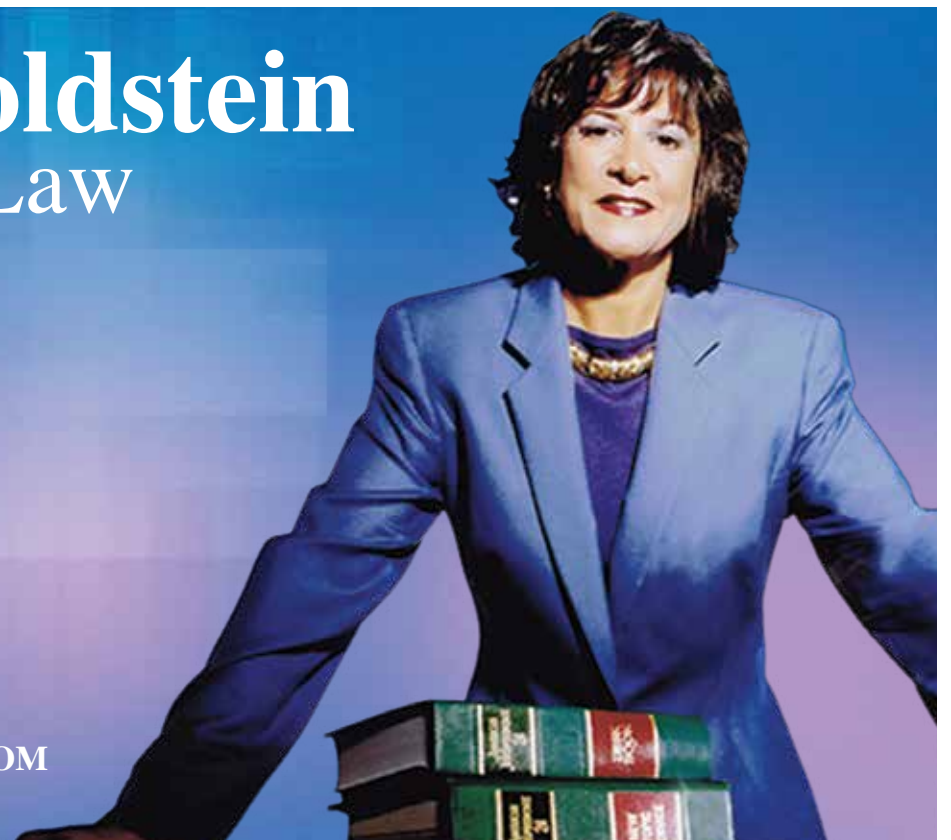


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Thursday, May 25

- 7:00 pm - Dairy Dinner*
- 7:30 pm - Introductory teaching (Rabbi Wolk)
- 8:00 pm – Yom Tov Maariv
- 8:30 pm – Study Session (Rabbi Kornsgold)
- 9:00 pm –Dessert Break
- 9:15 pm – Study Session (Cantor Lissek)
- 9:45 pm – Late night learning (Rabbi Wolk)

SHAVUOT – DAY 1: Friday, May 26

- 9:30 am – Shavuot Morning Services
- 10:00 am –Tot Shavuot with Temple Beth El
- 12:00 pm - Kiddush
- 6:15 pm – Shabbat and Shavuot Evening Services

SHAVUOT – DAY 2: Saturday, May 27

- 9:30 am – Shavuot Morning Services, including Yizkor
- 12:00 pm – Shabbat Kiddush
- 5:30 pm - Shavuot Evening Services

***To register for the dairy dinner, visit the
Upcoming Programs page at templeisraelnc.org**

Religious Life

Havurat Tikvah Weathers the Pandemic and Plans Ahead

By Elaine Millen

Finally, spring has emerged and with it, Havurat Tikvah has begun to reconvene in person for some of its services and activities. During the pandemic, the congregational board decided to conduct services and other events via virtual technologies, and to only invite the membership and not guests.

Over the last three years, Havurat Tikvah has been able to maintain a sense of community. This enabled the congregation to participate in this new experience and feel connected, even though not in person. It emerged with a hybrid of live and Zoomed events and services.

During this period, Kabbalat

Shabbat and Saturday morning community services with multiple participants and communal blessings, as well as High Holiday services, were conducted virtually. Leaders moved arks, Torahs and other religious items to their homes and made the environment quite heimish. Being able to see each other virtually helped to stem the sense of loneliness and isolation.

Last spring, the havurah held its first in-person, outdoor service at a member's home. Over the last several months the congregation has continued holding in-person Saturday morning services and this past fall, the congregation's first hybrid High Holiday services consisting of

both Zoom and in-person attendance were facilitated with volunteers staffing the computer while leaders presented their portions of the services. Since its beginning, Havurat Tikvah has broken up its High Holidays services into what is affectionally called "chunks" with "chunk leaders" conducting their parts, along with other volunteers who do Hebrew or English reading or prayers.

Other activities over the last three years included virtual Chanukah parties and celebrations, book discussions, Israeli movie nights, and minyanim. Comfort and aid have been made available by the Chicken Soup Committee for members who needed

its outreach.

Over the upcoming summer, the board and High Holiday service leaders will convene to prepare for the fall and there will be no services during this time, as is the general protocol. The congregational calendar will become public again when activities resume in September for those who might find interest in attending services or events. Email info@havurattikvah.org to inquire.

Havurat Tikvah is a warm, supportive and nurturing Jewish Reconstructionist congregation with Shabbat services and a full spectrum of holiday observances, as well as cultural and educational options for both families and single adults. We are a di-

verse group of families, singles, and Jewish and interfaith couples who participate in projects that promote social justice.

We value and depend upon member participation and leadership for our religious services, spiritual growth, and governance.

Havurat Tikvah is an affiliate of Reconstructing Judaism.

For more information on upcoming services, programs, membership or other queries, call 980-225-5330, write to Havurat Tikvah, P.O. Box 12684, Charlotte, NC 28220, email membership@havurattikvah.org or visit havurattikvah.org. Havurat Tikvah is also on Facebook at facebook.com/groups/havurattikvah/



Meet Greta Bolton, The Ruach's Newest Band Member

By Greta Bolton

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who found joy in using the fireplace hearth as a stage at her home. She would sing along to records or put on little shows for her family. This little girl was in constant motion whether in ballet class, running around in the neighborhood, or dancing and singing along to music videos (thank you MTV). Summers were for camp. There was something special about a Jewish camp. Music, worship, and a community of friends came together in a way she didn't know was possible. She couldn't wait for the first day of camp all year long and cried on the last day as she left such a magical place that meant so much to her. This little girl is me - Greta Bolton and my childhood years being active in music, dance, and Jewish camp built the woman I turned out to



Greta Bolton

be today.

In high school choirs and in college, I worked on musical technique and earned a BFA in musical theater at the University

of Florida. Upon graduation, my journey began as a singer, dancer, and actor working on a Royal Caribbean cruise ship then in local theaters in San Diego and doing bit parts in TV shows and commercials. Being married to a Marine, living in San Diego made this kind of work possible. Once babies came into the picture and we moved a couple of times, the music faded away as other things became priorities. The music chapter was closed for a while, but I knew it would return in some way. I just didn't quite know how it would manifest.

In our last military move, my family and I made to Alexandria, Virginia, I found a wonderful Jewish community. My kids connected with their religious school friends in a strong way and my husband and I connected to the other parents there. It was

a wonderful community. When my husband retired, we were able to choose for the first time in our married life where we would like to live. Charlotte seemed to have all the things we were looking for and we are so happy we planted ourselves here to grow.

Fast forward to the pandemic. I found myself at home and scrolling Facebook on a Friday night while my kiddos were either with friends or working. I discovered a wonderful Jewish musician named Joe Buchanan doing a Friday night Shabbat service on Facebook. I would tune in and enjoy this new format of worship from my couch with songs and blessings that were fresh, catchy, and meaningful. I shared this with my family around the country and they watched too. In January 2021, I went through a health crisis. When I recovered, I needed to

evaluate and assess how I was living my life and question my purpose. It boiled down to honoring myself and my gifts I can share with others. Being a wife, mom, and Pilates instructor (yes, I shifted to a line of work I could do anywhere) for so many years, I needed to dig deep to find what brought me joy as a kid.

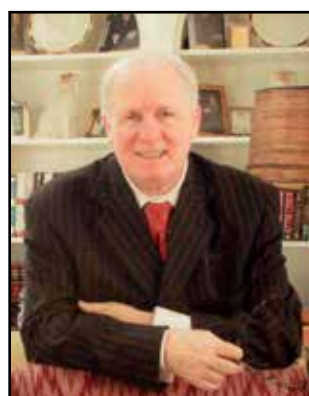
The universe seemed to bring Judaism and music back to my life in a way that resonated with me. Joe Buchanan made a stop in Charlotte doing a Shabbat service and concert in April 2022. In the online community he created, we were able to connect on a personal level. In that connection, my family shared with him I used to sing. He invited me to sing three songs with him during that concert. It had been about 18 years since I had sung in front of people. I was terrified to share that part of me again. Singing that night brought a joy back that felt incredible! Peter Levinson and Lisa Dale from The Ruach happened to be at that concert. We chatted after and I learned that The Ruach was in need and looking for an additional singer.

Funny how the universe works!! I think Divine intervention played a part in bringing us together.

A new chapter has opened for me by joining The Ruach. I have music and a very special and unique Jewish community back in my life. That uplifted feeling I got from my summer camp is the same way I feel after a Ruach Shabbat Experience. I feel honored to be part of that band that delivers a meaningful alternative way to connect with our Charlotte Jewish community.

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Religious Life

Our Children are Our Guarantors: Celebrate the Renewal of the Torah at Chabad on May 26

By Rabbi Yossi Groner

The holiday of Shavuot this year marks the 3335th anniversary of the greatest event in Jewish history, the giving of

the Torah by G-d to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. This monumental event changed the Jewish people forever, as we entered into an eternal bond

with G-d.

The giving of the Torah was also a turning point for the nations of the world, as it is the basis for G-d's universal code of morality which continues to shape and guide society throughout civilization. For Jewish people, Torah is life. Torah is the source of who we are as it nurtures and sustains us as a people and also as individuals.

The Talmud sets forth the special readings of the Torah for Shabbat and holidays at the synagogue services. On Shavuot, we are mandated to read the portion of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai, from the Book of Exodus, including the reading of the Aseret Hadibrot —The Ten Commandments.

Seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt, all Jewish men, women, and children were assembled at the foot of the mountain for the spectacular moment of the giving of the Torah. Today we again aim for a full assembly of all the Jewish

people across the world to be present in the synagogue at the reading of this special portion in the Torah.

There is a unique emphasis on our children participating in this reading. The Midrash says that before G-d gave the Torah, He requested from Moshe guarantors who could ensure the observance and safekeeping of the Torah. The only guarantors G-d accepted were the children. By guaranteeing that the children will be educated in Torah and its observances, we secure the perpetual life of Judaism. Your family can be part of history by joining this special moment and ensuring the continuity of the Jewish people and the Torah!

That is why the Lubavitcher Rebbe called on all Jewish children to be present and partake in the renewal of the Torah by listening to the special Torah portion on the first day of Shavuot.

This year Shavuot falls on Friday, May 26, and Chabad

of Charlotte will host a special Torah celebration at the Epstein Family Chabad Center on Sardis Road. The celebration will include the reading of the Torah and a grand Kiddush dairy gourmet luncheon prepared by Kosher Charlotte. In addition to an elaborate dairy menu, there will be plenty of delicious ice cream for the children (and adults) to enjoy.

The service will begin at 10 a.m. A special children's program will start at 11 a.m. with the Torah reading included. All are invited to attend. There will be no charge for this event.

For more information, please visit chabadnc.org or call Chabad of Charlotte at (704) 366-3984.



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Women's News

Spring Into Hadassah

By Aileen Greenberg-Kriner

We're in that wonderful late spring/early summer season in Charlotte. Enjoy!

Hadassah Charlotte Metro's Taste of Passover event was fun, delicious, and entertainingly competitive. Roz Cooper and Cheri Titlebaum co-chaired the event at Roz's home. Each woman who attended brought a dairy or pareve salad, main course, or dessert, along with the recipe. June Hirschmann made beautiful floral and matzah centerpieces. After noshing and sharing Passover stories, Roz led a Pesach trivia challenge where teams of four competed for prizes. After the event, Marci Goldberg shared an online recipe book she created and shared it with participants, so they could add new recipes to their Passover repertoire. Hadassah sisters at their best!

Save the Dates

...for our monthly Hadassah Wine & Schmooze at 7 p.m. on May 2 at Vintner Wine Market in Arboretum. When you make a purchase at Vintner's, please let them know you are a Hadassah member. Vintner's donates a portion of their sales to our Charlotte Metro chapter.

...to Celebrate the Tatas. Lunch, auction, wine pull, and more on Thursday, Oct 26 from 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Please email or call (see contact information in Helpful Hadassah Info at the end of this article) if you would like to volunteer.

May Reading Groups

The Short Story Discussion Group finished reading the individual stories in Amos Oz's "Scenes from a Village Life." At the May 12 meeting, we will review the eight stories we have read and talk about how they relate to Israeli society, politics, and reality. Short Story Discussion Group will meet at 11:45 a.m. via Zoom.

For future meetings, the group voted to read the book "Frankly Feminist: Short Stories by Jewish Women" from Lilith Magazine, edited by Susan Weidman Schneider and Yona Zeldis McDonough. The book is reviewed in the March/April 2023 issue of the Hadassah magazine.

Beverly's Book Nook will meet on Friday, May 19, at 1:30 p.m. on Zoom. We will discuss Dahlia Lithwick's "Lady Justice: Women, the Law, and the Battle to Save America."

Ms. Lithwick profiles women lawyers whose stories provide a contextualizing capsule tour of the era and offers some bracing hope. Lithwick's writing is friendly to lay readers and marked by her trademark pithy wit and an endearing faith in the legal system's promise. "Women plus law equals magic," she concludes.

Zoom with Hadassah BookTalk on May 23 at 7 p.m. Our May BookTalk selection is "The Last Rose of Shanghai" by Weina Dai Randel. In 1940s Jap-



Hadassah sisters enjoying A Taste of Passover together.

anese-occupied Shanghai, two people from different cultures are drawn together by fate and the freedom of music. Aiyi Shao is a young heiress and the owner of a Shanghai nightclub. Ernest Reismann is a penniless Jewish refugee driven out of Germany, an outsider searching for shelter in a city wary of strangers. "The Last Rose of Shanghai" is a timeless, sweeping story of love and redemption.

Helpful Hadassah Info

The next Hadassah Charlotte Metro Board meeting is Monday, May 15 at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Learn about our chapter and join Hadassah. Contact Lori Trapani at the phone or email at the end of this article or come to one

of our events. We would love to meet you!

Our website, www.hadassah-cltevents.org, has details and registration links for our events. If



Anik Harrison, Andrea Rae, Marci Goldberg

you have questions, suggestions, or need a Zoom link, email HadassahCLT@gmail.com or call our general phone number, (980) 553-1880. Your message will be forwarded promptly to the event coordinator.

Follow us on social media: Facebook (Hadassah CLT Metro), Instagram (Hadassah Charlotte Metro) and Twitter (@HadassahCLT).



June Hirschmann created the Passover centerpieces.

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OFFER: Patients must prepay for the special on May 4 or May 5 to take advantage of the event pricing. Appointments can be scheduled on either of these days or any day in May. Patient may not buy additional product for future office visits.

JFS Welcomed National Author and Blogger to Charlotte for Caregiver Event

By Julie Loftis, JFS Marketing Specialist

Jewish Family Services (JFS) and The John Crosland School were delighted to welcome almost 100 guests to a unique program featuring parent and advocate Kate Swenson of Finding Cooper's Voice. Kate is the creator of the blog and Facebook page "Finding Cooper's Voice." She speaks regularly about autism, parenting, and motherhood, and is a contributor to "Today Parents," "Today," "Her View from Home," and the "Love What Matters" blog. Her mission is to create a safe space for families of children and teens with special needs to come together and laugh, cry and support each other.

Kate certainly accomplished this mission at "Finding the Joy in Caregiving" on March 22 at the program cohosted by JFS and

The John Crosland School. She reflected on her family's journey through autism diagnosis, early intervention, and transition to school services, and the emotional toll these experiences can take on a family. Kate discussed the transformation she made as not only a parent, but as a person, and the support that parents need from professionals, family members, and those within their community to help their family adjust to this new chapter of life. Kate related to guests, sharing her own emotional and personal experiences — both the highs and lows. Her closing thoughts included lessons she had learned in hopes of reducing isolation often experienced by parents and caregivers of individuals with disabilities, developmental delays, and neurodiversity.

"Finding the Joy in Caregiving" kicks off an upcoming pro-

gram offered by JFS for parents and caregivers. "We are proud to support families in the Charlotte community with the introduction of 'Taking Care of You: Self Care Skills for the Caregiver,' a series of four virtual workshops based on an evidence-informed program from the Caregiver TLC Curriculum," said Howard Olshansky, JFS executive director. The "Taking Care of You" series, which begins on April 26, will offer the opportunity to learn coping skills to deal with stress, create a personalized self-care plan, and connect with other parents and caregivers.

The workshops have been adapted from an evidenced-based caregiver program, also offered by JFS, called "Caregiver TLC," which is aimed towards caregivers of senior adults. The adaptations allow for parents and other caregivers of individuals

with disabilities, developmental delays and neurodiversity to come together and learn skills to support their shared experiences. Although each circumstance is unique, caregivers often experience universal emotions such as stress, anxiety, frustration, and burnout. The "Taking Care of You" workshops will each focus on a specific challenging topic and provide concrete, easy to use skills to help caregivers build their own "tool box" of self-care skills. "While some may view self-care as an indulgence, what we know about stress management and caregiving, is that learning skills to take

care of one's own mental health needs is really a necessity," explains Rachel Green, director of programs and services at JFS. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about self-care skills for the caregiver, visit JFSCharlotte.org.



Jewish Family Services Volunteers & Donors March 2023

Volunteers: Jessica Alfandary, Marcia Arnholt, Mike Arnholt, Amy Baden, Daniel Benjamin, Andrew Bernstein, Suzy Catenazzo, Dan Coblenz, Jonathan Collman, Andrea Cronson, Julie Dermack, Joni Deutsch, Sheryl Effren, Terri Fishman, Rachel Friedman, Meredith Gartner, Dave Gerrard, Marty Goldfarb, Richard Goldsmith, Jennifer Golynsky, Gail Halverson, Rebecca Hockfield, Oren Hubara, Tara Hubara, Dawn Hubbs, Bob Jacobson, Mike Kaplan, Rikki Kinitsky, Jennifer Koss, Elliot and Stephanie Kreitman, Marcia Lampert, Eric Lerner, Kim Levy, Adina Loewensteiner, Matt Luftglass, Gene Marx, Frada Mozenter, Barbara Rein, Nina Rose, Marilyn Schuster, Janice Shubin, Louis Sinkoe, Harry Sparks, Lorin Steifel, Steve Teich, Gail Vogel, Amalia Warshenbrot, Susan Webber, Nancy Wielunski, Amanda Zaidman

Live Laugh Give Volunteers: Meredith Baumstein, Andrew Bernstein, Andrea Cronson, Katherine Fainstein, Marlo Fox, Rachel Friedman, Blair Goldsmith, Marcia Lampert, Adina Loewensteiner, Rachel Peterson, Jodi Michel, Karen Ransenberg, Karen Silver

Purim Volunteers: Hebrew High for making haman-taschen, Women of Temple Israel for making shaloch

manot, Jessica Alfandary, Gail Baron, Dan Coblenz, Joni Deutch, Dana Ditesheim, Rob Friedman, Richard Goldsmith, Jodi Joseph and Lester, Rikki Kinitsky, Kim Levy, Matt Luftglass, Beth Rose Oxman, Cindy Siesel, Lynne Sheffer, Lauren Stark, Lorin Steifel, Harry Sparks, Amalia Warshenbrot

Hadassah Meal Preppies: Sharon Cavanaugh, Karen Futtersak, June Hirschmann, Yvette Jacobson, Johnson and Wales, Judy Kaufmann, Penny Krieger, Andrea McCleary,

Helene Schilian, Elissa Vining

Mitzvah Basket Donation: the Wachs family in honor of Bennet and Daniels B'nei Mitzvah

Food Drives: CJP Pre-K class

Food Pantry Donations: Thank you to our generous community for continuing to donate to the food pantry. We continue to collect donations every other Wednesday at the portico entrance to the Blumenthal Center for Jewish Education Building at Shalom Park.

Jewish Family Services Tributes March 2023

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Ruth Goldberg
Ashley Hayward
Ruth Goldberg
Florence "Grammy" Jaffa
Jessie and Joni Cohen and Kids
Lee Kritzer
Joel and Paulette Cohen
Jill Newman
Paul and Lynn Edelstein

In Memory of

Theodore Cohen
The Richman Family
Ralph Isolano
Eugene and Bonnie Musicus
Robert Lieberman
Paul and Lynn Edelstein
Gary Silverstein

In Memory of

Mildred Ruben Peskin
Joel and Paulette Cohen
Ed Pizer
Joel and Paulette Cohen
Paul and Lynn Edelstein
Stan Greenspon
Gary Silverstein
Tuesday Pottery Class Friends
Isadore Roseman
Rose Atkinson
Joe Steiner
Gary Silverstein
Harold Turteltaub
Suly Chenkin
Fred Winton
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Skylar Hirschmann-Hulon
Allan and Marcelle Oxman
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Spice is Charlotte's premier community for Jewish people over 50!
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The Impact of Environment on Mental Health

By Howard Olshansky, JFS Executive Director
May is Mental Health Awareness Month. This year's national campaign is "Look Around, Look Within" focusing on the impact your environment, both

internal and external, plays on your mental health. All aspects of your environment, including that at home, work, and in your community, can directly affect your emotional well-being, beginning as early as childhood.

According to an article in "Verywell Mind," "Environmental factors impact mental wellness by changing brain structure and function. Research on children supports this, noting that children raised in adverse environ-

ments tend to have hindered brain development, increasing their risk of memory issues, learning difficulties, and behavioral problems."

Many will recall the popularity of feng shui. The idea behind feng shui is to have a place that helps your inner self harmonize with your surroundings. A harmonious space will not only be pleasing to the eyes, but to the soul. And this can help bring inner harmony and reduce stress, anxiety, and much more. While many went to great expense to create an environment based on the principles of feng shui, there are much easier ways to create a home environment that supports positive mental health:

- Reduce clutter — Overcrowding your house with stuff can trigger stress and anxiety. The less clutter around you, the better you will feel. It will bring a sense of balance and help you regain inner peace.
- Calming lights, colors, and sounds — The lighting, temperature, sounds, smells, and color palette of an environment are important to how comfortable, relaxed, and safe you feel. For example, harsh lighting and loud noises can lead to anxiety or agitation, while dark and cold spaces can lead to feeling unmotivated — especially in the winter.

- Cleanliness — Keeping your living space clean is shown to promote calmness and a sense of control over your day-to-day life. Neatness provides predictability, which can cut down on brain fatigue and anxiety. Less time looking for lost items or getting distracted is always a good thing.

Your workspace or even your automobile can affect your emotions. Think about how it feels when you clear your desk at work and get organized. For most, there is a sense of accomplishment and reduced feeling of stress. Is your car clean or cluttered? Do you listen to music that is relaxing or energizing or talk radio that increases anxiety?

The idea that environment affects mental health doesn't apply to solely your indoor surroundings. The physical outside environment can contribute to your emotional health. Spending time in nature is linked to many positive mental health outcomes, such as improved focus, lower stress, better mood, and reduced risk of developing a mental health condition.

Seventy percent of respondents to a Mental Health America Connection Survey reported wishing they had more time outdoors, ideally in nature, away from their neighborhoods. Cities often have more stressors to physical and mental health, but green spaces (like parks and gardens) can reduce the nega-

tive impact of those hectic, noisy environments. Even spending some time in your backyard (if you have one) can produce positive outcomes.

Feeling connected to nature helps your mood even if you don't spend time outdoors. Children living in neighborhoods with more green space had a reduced risk of developing depression, mood disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and substance use disorder. Even being in the presence of indoor plants is worthwhile. Studies have demonstrated this to improve focus, memory, and stress tolerance. Something as simple as letting natural sunlight into your home can bring the outdoors inside.

When talking about the impact of the environment, it is important to recognize that besides your physical surroundings, your "social" environment also has a significant impact on your emotional health. A person's social environment is their society and all surroundings influenced by humans.

Gail Saltz, MD, clinical associate professor of psychiatry at the New York Presbyterian Hospital Weill-Cornell School of Medicine, wrote about how the social environment plays a big role in mental health. "Having close, trusted, intimate others in your life is a significant positive factor for mental and physical health," she says. Saltz indicates this is true of a healthy marriage, a good circle of friends, and other important family relationships. Saltz goes on to say, "Lack of relationships, leading to loneliness causes depression and anxiety," she says, "while tumultuous and disturbing relationships lead to chronic stress and lower mood and higher anxiety."

Another major aspect of your social environment is your connection to social media. While many of us enjoy our ability to connect with family, old friends, and colleagues, social media has also become a source of judgment and acceptance, causing significant increases in stress, anxiety, and depression.

To use your environment as a positive influence on your mental health, evaluate your home, work, social, and other environmental factors in your life. Then try reducing your physical clutter, increase your connection to the natural environment, and focus your social connections on those that make you smile.

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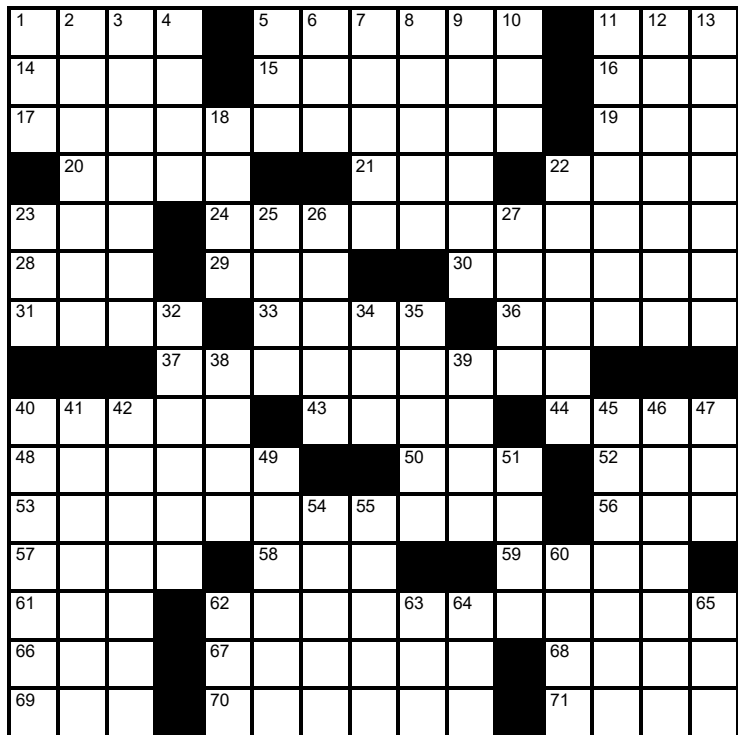
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May Crossword: There and Back Again



Down

1. Zero in on
2. One could turn on your lights long before Alexa, with "The"
3. ____ oblongata
4. European cheese center
5. Indian honorific
6. Line of jeans
7. Regal Hebrew name
8. Hitchhikers' needs
9. Word in many a prayer
10. Where many spend a year in Isr.
11. "Avatar" director
12. Procedural obstacle
13. Broke down, as a computer
18. Hawaiian fish, when doubled
22. Equality of rank
23. "Amazing Race" network
25. Yemeni but not Persian
26. Poetic rapper of renown
27. "Enterprise" navigator
32. Unit of pearls
34. Palindromic first name of infamy
35. City in northern India
38. "Choice beef" Abbr.
39. Synagogue stage
40. "My Sister's Keeper" author
41. Provided with tools
42. Takes to the skies
45. Covid, at the very start
46. Citrus fruit
47. Chicago-based major food store chain
49. Ran a wedding
51. "Get outta here!"
54. Sportscaster Rashad
55. It can keep you up
60. Ad ____
62. Some motion
63. Some NFL pass catchers
64. "Ish" abbr.
65. Prepare, as a Shabbat table

Across

1. Pinnacle
5. Some notes and TVs
11. Midwest Kosher org.
14. Classic TV's "____ Three Lives"
15. Call it a day
16. ____ Lingus
17. Palindromic words from the first man when meeting his mate
19. Labor Day telethon org.
20. Sports company that hasn't given in to BDS pressure
21. Outdoor gear retailer
22. Unwelcome guests in many hotels
23. Sgt.'s subordinate
24. Palindromic action Avimelech may have done to Avraham's wife
28. "Air" or "canto" opener
29. Money for later: Abbr.
30. Where soccer is football
31. Ladies in Spain, for short
33. Intense
36. Like notebook paper

37. Jerry Seinfeld's palindromic one was in 1980 on "Benson"
40. Juicy fruits
43. Plague locale
44. Himalayan mystery creature
48. Enter with hostile intent
50. "Pinafore" letters
52. Be a nudnik
53. Possible palindromic biography title for the first murderer
56. It can solve many crimes
57. Minor prophet: Abbr.
58. John who played 27-Down in "Star Trek" films
59. Words with shake or break
61. To the max, for short
62. Alternative name for a Jewish newspaper
66. He surrendered to Grant in 1865
67. Rental contracts
68. Rancor
69. Bucs' scores
70. Weird as can be
71. Groundskeeper Willie, for one

(Answers on page 34)

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Student Voices at Queens University's Hillel

By Lara Boyle

When students leave home for college and beyond, many wonder how they will maintain their Jewish identity in the “real world,” whether that be grad school or a job in the workforce. Hillel seeks to fill that void and answer those concerns. Queens University's Hillel is no exception. Before coming to Queens to major in creative writing and joining Hillel, I used to be quiet about my Judaism despite my rich Jewish life. But these four years have grown my desire to be openly Jewish, and as I prepare to graduate this semester, I know I will leave proud to be Jewish in any space I enter.

At Queens University of Charlotte, Hillel offers a place to celebrate Jewish traditions where everyone can come together without any fear of judgment. No matter how you identify or what your beliefs are, all are welcome to experience the light and laughter found at weekly Shabbat dinners and year-round holiday events. But the opportunities for Jewish life don't stop there. Rabbi Judy Schindler is a professor of Jewish studies, a campus rabbi, and director of the Stan Greenspon Holocaust and Social Justice Education Center

at Queens.

The pluralistic mindset encouraged by Queens allows all students to engage in important conversations about religion and continue to learn from one another in and out of the classroom. Asking questions from a space of genuine intellectual curiosity and compassion for others is a pinnacle of Judaism, and an approach embraced at Queens.

One student who exemplifies these traits is David Lindner, whose longtime passion for Jewish life led him to Queens.

“Having Hillel on campus gives me a larger sense of voice and security on campus more than anything,” he said. The fact that Queens, a historically Presbyterian college, has embraced the Jewish community enough to give it space and recognition to exist is truly remarkable and perfectly embodies Queens' mission to be inclusive to all who attend.”

Lindner, a sophomore communications major, loves the friendships he's made in Hillel, especially “anytime we get together and have dinner together, laugh, converse, and create remarkable memories.” But his connection to Rabbi Schindler extends well beyond his college education. Lindner has known

Schindler for his entire life, because his family has attended the synagogue where she was a rabbi, Temple Beth El, from before he was born until he became a teenager.

“She has been through every major Jewish step of my life from my bris to my bar mitzvah,” Lindner said. Before he applied to Queens, he dreamed of taking a class with her and furthering his Jewish education into his adulthood. He feels a “great amount of pride to currently be a student in Professor Schindler's class, ‘The Bible: Who's In, Who's Out.’”

Noah Goldman, currently with Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, a Queens alumnus, and the former coordinator of Jewish life at Queens, loved having a space on campus for Jewish students. He returned to campus for the role because he missed being at Queens and felt the work he did as a student in interfaith connections had been left unfinished. He has many good Hillel memories but says one of his favorites is Soul Food Shabbat, a collaboration between Hillel and the Black Student Union to celebrate Black History Month as well as the layered similar history and struggles

between the Black and Jewish communities.

“I really enjoyed having a space to share the Black and Jewish experiences with food and stories.”

He found great joy in helping students explore their own Jewish identities and to the extent possible, teaching non-Jewish students about Jewish identity, religion, and culture. He believes Hillel helps Jewish students have a safe space to explore who they are with fellow Jews.

“It's important that everyone be safe on campus. I think Queens is a safe place but it is important for people to have a

space to be with people who share their identity and tradition.”

“While we have many opportunities to continue growing Jewish life at Queens, we've made great progress in making this campus a place where young Jewish people can grow and celebrate their traditions and culture,” said Rabbi Schindler. “Just as important, we are investing in cross-cultural and interfaith relationships and understanding, hopefully preparing tomorrow's leaders to advocate for peace and social justice.”



Stan Greenspon
Holocaust and Social Justice
Education Center

The Hebrew Cemetery joins with the community in remembering the names of those who have been buried at the Hebrew Cemetery in the month of February.



Joseph Steiner	9-20-1943	-	3-21-2023
Vivian Bitensky	2-2-1932	-	3-24-2023
Emery Szabo	4-5-1933	-	3-27-2023
Jay Kirsch	10-12-1943	-	3-29-2023
Irving Swartz	7-7-1933	-	3-31-2023

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Around the Table: “The Kids Book of Challah” Opens Up the World of Challah to Young People



By Charlotte Rouchouze

Rochie Pinson’s second book about challah, entitled “The Kids Book of Challah,” talks directly to young people about how to embark on the delicious, creative and spiritual journey of baking challah. Pinson explains in an interview how, as a young rebbetzin in New York, she began noticing that challah-baking events had a way of drawing people into Jewish community life when nothing else could. People might not come for other holidays or services, but they came for the challah-baking, and this opened a space for Jewish women in particular to learn more about

and participate in the tradition. And it is no wonder! Challah is a feast for the senses, and what better way to center ourselves and usher in quiet family time than mixing, kneading, baking, and of course eating fresh, fragrant bread? This led her to write a first book about challah, entitled “Rising,” to which this is the follow up.

What is challah exactly? The word challah actually refers to the piece of dough removed (“separated”) from a large batch of bread dough in a ritual known as hafrashat challah. This piece was once given to the priests in the holy Temple in Jerusalem but is now typically burned as a remembrance of the Temple and of our many blessings. The challah made from that batch, especially when it sits as a pair of loaves on the Shabbat table, also reminds us of the double delivery of manna that the Torah tells us G-d sent in order that the people need not work on the Sabbath. Any bread can in fact be challah, since it is about the use and not the recipe, but over the years, the sweet, rich braided bread that we know today has all but come to

symbolize the Jewish shabbat.

As you can see, the making and eating of challah runs deep in the Jewish tradition, and Pinson first takes on the task of explaining this background to her young readers. The first 30 pages or so of the book are geared toward explaining the spiritual significance of Shabbat and challah-baking within the Jewish tradition, and this section includes a variety of prayers and readings relevant to the process. She even dabbles in introducing the Chassidic concept according to which the mitzvah of separation and the prayer of hafrashat challah opens up a kind of channel through which the entirety of the dough, and even the home and all who dwell in it, become imbued with holiness. In a bite-side introduction to Chassidic philosophy for young people, Pinson explains, “How do we transform an ordinary house into a miniature Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple)? By using everything in the home for holy purposes. Wine becomes Kiddush. Bread becomes Challah. When we use our dining room table as a Shabbat table, it’s no longer just a table — it’s



Sarah David, 12, helped me in the kitchen today as we made this lemon poppy challah

an altar...”

In fact, I will say that when I realized that the author was a Chabad rebbetzin, I expected a mostly spiritually-oriented book. And if you pick up the book, do expect, as I mentioned, an introduction to the religious aspects of challah-baking and its

connection to the observance of Shabbat. But “The Kids Book of Challah” is in no way light on the recipes. It includes an impressive variety of both sweet and savory recipes, some of which relate to a holiday (Tu B’Shevat Focaccia or Shavuot Cheese Flowers) and others that could be made any-time. Think of it as everything you never thought to do with challah dough.

She includes all the basic recipes, followed by unique flavored challahs such as Maple, Gingerbread and Sesame Halva; Then there are savory recipes such as Sausage and Spinach Strata, Hot Diggity Dog Challah, and Pretzel Challah Bites; and then dessert recipes such as White Chocolate Challah Pudding, Chocolate Hazelnut Twists, and Pecan Pie Babka Buns. At the end we also get a clear guide to a number of braiding techniques, both simple and fancy. The presentation is bright, beautifully designed, and full of children, including CJDS’s very own Rocha Groner (p.134)!

Pinson has written a lovely

(Continued on page 34)

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Around the Table

(Continued on page 33)

and accessible guide to all the important aspects of challah baking, both as a culinary and a spiritual practice, and I would highly recommend her book to anyone interested in upping their challah game or introducing challah-baking to their children or teens.

Charlotte Rouchouze, PhD is a local French teacher, food blogger, and beaded jewelry designer. Her blog about food traditions from around the world can be found at www.thechildrenstable.com.

com. Contact her at charlotte.rouchouze@yahoo.com. "The Kids Book of Challah" can be found in the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library.



Lemon Poppy Challah

Challah:

- 2 cups very warm water
- ¾ cup sugar
- 4 ½ tsp yeast
- ½ cup canola oil
- ¼ cup poppy seeds
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- Zest of 2 lemons
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp lemon extract
- 1 ½ tbsp fine sea salt
- 8 cups all-purpose flour

Glaze: One egg yolk, beaten

1. Pour the warm water into a bowl. Add the sugar and yeast; stir to combine.
2. Add the oil, poppy seeds, lemon zest, vanilla extract, and lemon extract. Stir well.
3. Add the salt and flour, adding in only as much flour as needed to pull away from the sides of the bowl.
4. Knead until smooth and elastic; Put a bit of oil in the challah bowl and roll the dough around in it. Cover the bowl and let it rise in a warm spot for 1 ½ - 2 hours or overnight in the fridge.
5. When the dough is puffy, punch it down to let out the air, then do the challah separation without a blessing.
6. Braid as desired, glaze with egg.
7. Allow to rise another 45-60 minutes then bake in a 350 degree oven for 30 minutes.
8. Once challah is cool, drizzle with lemon glaze, recipe below.

Lemon Glaze:

- ½ cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2-3 tbsp milk of choice
- Food coloring, optional

Mix all the ingredients together except for the milk. Then add the milk slowly, mixing continuously, until the mixture is very smooth and just pourable.

(Puzzle on page 31)

1	A	2	C	3	M	4	E			5	S	6	H	7	A	8	R	9	P	10	S			11	C	12	R	13	C
14	I	L	E	D					15	R	E	T	I	R	E									16	A	E	R		
17	M	A	D	A	18	M	I	M	A	D	A	M											19	M	D	A			
		20	P	U	M	A					21	R	E	I							22	P	E	T	S				
23	C	P	L			24	H	25	A	R	A	S	S	27	S	A	R	A	H										
28	B	E	L			29	I	R	A					30	E	U	R	O	P	E									
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40	P	E	A	R	S				43	N	I	L	E			44	Y	E	T	I									
48	I	N	V	A	D	49	E					50	H	M	51	S				52	N	A	G						
53	C	A	I	N	A	M	54	A	N	I	A	C								56	D	N	A						
57	O	B	A	D			58	C	H	O					59	A	L	E	G										
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66	L	E	E				67	L	E	A	S	E	S					68	B	I	L	E							
69	T	D	S				70	O	D	D	E	S	T					71	S	C	O	T							

Newspaper archives are a treasure trove of collective memories, providing a snapshot of our history. The following article is from The Charlotte Jewish News, August 2012. To read other issues of The CJN, visit the archives at <https://www.digitalnc.org/newspapers/charlotte-jewish-news-charlotte-nc/>.

Looking Back: Year 2012

First JCC Kids Triathlon Benefits Levine Children's Hospital

If you were anywhere near Shalom Park on June 3, you were able to witness the first Levine JCC Kids Triathlon benefitting pediatric rehabilitation programs at the Levine Children's Hospital (LCH). What an incredible way to kick off the summer — over 150 able-bodied children swam, biked, and ran alongside six children from the Adaptive Sports and Adventures Program (ASAP) at LCH. The weather was just perfect and the excitement and sense of community was overwhelming across the park. Children ages 5-14 of all different abilities, swam, biked and ran for a cause with their friends and family cheering them on from the sidelines.

Some children swam with assistance, used hand cycles or leg braces, and others participated in a traditional way, but each child crossed the finish line with their heads held high. With chants from the sidelines encouraging each participant, the message was clear to all 3 the children



were all in this together to TRI for a Cause: continued care and aggressive rehabilitation therapies.

After a child suffers a significant injury or illness, they often need inpatient rehabilitation services to regain strength and functional skills necessary to return home or to school. LCH provides the region's only comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation services for children and adolescents who have experienced a debilitating illness or injury. With a continu-

ity of care that is unparalleled, LCH offers high level outpatient services once a patient is released.

Upon release from the hospital, LCH patients have the opportunity to participate in ASaA, which is a part of Carolina's Rehabilitation. This program, open to anyone in the community, is designed to challenge youth (and adults) with physical disabilities to develop skills that will lead to and enhance an active and productive lifestyle - one without barriers.



amazing opportunity you gave the kids ... we cannot wait for next year." And LCH patient expressed his excitement by saying, "This was the best day of my life. I cannot wait to do it again."

Mann Travels and Disney were happy to support the LJCC's first Kids Triathlon by providing the top fundraiser with a trip to the Magic Kingdom. We also want to send a special thanks to the Goodrich Corporation and the Leon Levine Foundation for their generous support, as well as Carolinas Healthcare Foundation, Friendly Dentist, Varji and Varji Salon and Spa, Macaroni Kid, McGuire Woods, Dick's Sporting Goods, Coca Cola, and Menchie's. Along with these sponsors' generous support the event raised \$35,000 for the ASAP program.

This triathlon mimicked others around the city in many ways, but the true joy and nachas was seeing the children, who have been patients at LCH participate in the event side by side other children — a moment that was only a dream until now. One mother expressed her appreciation of the event stating, “All three of my girls participated ... As a parent and as a board member of ASAP, I really want to thank you for this

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LOVE the continuing care in place should you need it

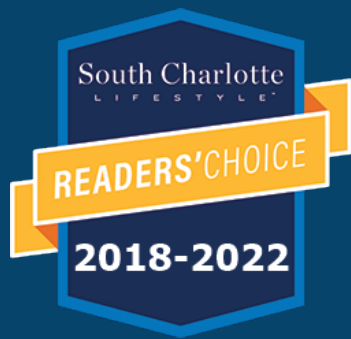
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