

Holocaust Education and Awareness Week Features Yom HaShoah Commemoration and Dance Performance

Each year the Charlotte Jewish community comes together to commemorate Yom HaShoah. This year, the 2024 Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Community Commemoration will be observed in the context of an entire Holocaust Education and Awareness Week, May 1-8, a first for Charlotte.

During that week, Carolyn Dorfman Dance, a NY/NJ-based contemporary modern dance company in residence in Charlotte, will lead educational Holocaust awareness programs using modern dance at private schools, university dance departments, and local dance studios.

Holocaust Education and Awareness Week is the brainchild of Rabbi Stuart Gershon, a retired congregational rabbi living in Charlotte. Rabbi Gershon said, "Our annual Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Community Commemoration is a sacred trust. However, with antisemitism and Holocaust denial rising exponentially in America, more must be done to meet the challenge of the moment. We need to engage multiple communities of faith and ethnicity with the true facts of Holocaust history, so that they can recognize antisemitic intentions, and refute Holocaust deniers."

Together with community leaders, they decided that Holocaust awareness outreach to other communities, and especially to younger generations, held the potential to make a difference.

When asked why incorporate dance in this year's commemoration, Rabbi Gershon says,



Carolyn Dorfman Dance Performance, "Legacy Project: A Dance of Hope"

"Through the years, I've experienced beautiful Holocaust music and lecture-based programs. But I find that dance has the power to move people to another emotional level, especially the Holocaust-themed repertory of Carolyn Dorfman Dance."

Founded by Artistic Director Carolyn Dorfman, Carolyn Dorfman Dance is a nationally and internationally respected contemporary modern dance company, based in New Jersey and New York City. Carolyn is a child of Holocaust survivors. Carolyn Dorfman's acclaimed "Legacy Project: A Dance of Hope" is a tribute to her parents'

survival from the Holocaust.

Holocaust Education and Awareness Week will feature

two very special public programs in partnership with Carolyn Dorfman Dance.

The Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Community Commemoration, hosted this year by Temple Beth El at Shalom Park, will be observed on Sunday, May 5, 4-5:30 p.m. The commemoration will honor the memory of those who lost their lives in the Holocaust, including the lighting of six memorial candles to represent the six million Jews who perished and the recitation of the Mourner's Kaddish in their memory. Holocaust survivors living in our Charlotte community will also be recognized. Then Carolyn Dorfman Dance will present a powerfully moving performance of excerpts (with narration) from Carolyn Dorfman's Legacy Project, which gives voice to those who were silenced in the Holocaust. The Commemoration is free and open to the public. For more information and to RSVP, please visit www.bit.ly/adanceofhope.

Also open to the public, Car-

olyn Dorfman Dance will perform the entire "Legacy Project: A Dance of Hope" on Wednesday, May 8, 7-8:30 p.m. at Charlotte Country Day School (1440 Carmel Road). In the Legacy Project, Dorfman "... draws on her rich Jewish legacy to create a dance about survival, resilience, and memory, work that is honestly personal and yet powerfully universal." Tickets are \$10. For more information, please call Charlotte Country Day School at (704)-943-4500.

The Holocaust Education/Awareness initiative is made possible by the generosity of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, Temple Beth El, Temple Israel, Jewish Family Services, the Levine JCC, The Butterfly Project, the Stan Greenspon Holocaust and Social Justice Education Center, and The North Carolina Council on the Holocaust.

Levine-Sklut Judaic Library Celebrates Grand Reopening

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Community Relations Specialist

Amidst an atmosphere buzzing with anticipation, the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library opened its doors to the community for its Grand Reopening event, hosted by the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte's Center for Jewish Education. Eager visitors poured into the newly renovated space, ready to explore and partake in the activities.

Festivities began with the ceremonial ribbon cutting, setting the stage for the excitement to come. Among the attractions, a skilled balloon animal artist wowed attendees with her intricate creations. The "Donut, I Love U" food truck stationed outside the library served up tasty treats and coffee. For those with a spirit of adventure, a thrilling scavenger hunt awaited, guiding participants through the various nooks and corners of the revitalized library. As at-



Eric Sklut, Peggy Gartner, and Lori Sklut cut the ribbon at the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library Grand Reopening March 3.

tendees explored the transformed space, they were greeted by new features designed to enrich their library experience.

Library staff is thrilled to welcome everyone to this vibrant new community space. Come in and explore a diverse collection

of Jewish books and works by Jewish authors. Engage in open conversations in the welcoming community "living room" or find solace in cozy reading nooks, perfect for quiet retreats.

(Continued on page 3)

Editor's Corner

From Deepfakes to Democracy: The Impact of AI on Truth and Trust



Shira Firestone, Editor CJN

When it comes to AI, you likely fall into one of three camps: those who exclaim, “I love AI! It’s changed my life!”; those who worry, “I’m terrified of AI. It’s going to take our jobs and take over the world”; or “AI? What’s that?” Depending on the day and the context, I find myself in all three.

If you’re in the latter group, wondering what AI is, allow me to explain. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is far from new; it’s a technology that has been evolving over decades, finding applications in everything from early chess programs to predictive text. However, its only been in the last year that AI, especially in the form of large language models like Open AI’s ChatGPT, has exploded into everyday use

and vernacular.

Back in December 2022, I was sitting around the kitchen table with my grown children dabbling with ChatGPT. We were laughing, asking it to churn out funny poems and quirky songs, amazed by its wit and the speed with which it generated its responses, unaware of both its true potential and the seismic shift in how we interact in the digital space that was just around the corner.

What we were playing with was a form of generative AI, powered by something known as large language models. In layperson’s terms, think of it as a vast, invisible brain that’s read a chunk of the internet and can now generate new content based on that massive dataset.

Since 2022, the use of AI in everyday tasks has exploded, making life simpler and more efficient in many ways, permeating daily tasks such as research, writing emails, and even meal planning.

However, as we edge closer to the 2024 elections and as the Israel-Hamas war continues, my excitement about its potential is tempered by concern. Misinformation has played a pivotal role in shaping public opinion in past elections and conflicts, but with

the explosion of AI, the stakes have risen.

Convincing altered images, audio, and even video, increasingly easy to create by an amateur with the right software, have made it almost impossible for the layperson to determine what is real. And by the time the content is called out and exposed by experts to be fake, the potential for serious damage has already been done.

In an effort at voter suppression, a January deepfake robocall supposedly from President Joe Biden told voters not to vote in the New Hampshire primary election. “Voting this Tuesday only enables Republicans in their quest to elect Donald Trump again,” said the voice. In mid-March, the League of Women Voters of the United States announced that they are suing Democratic operative Steve Kramer and two telecom companies behind the call. “These types of voter suppression tactics have no place in our democracy,” said Celina Stewart, chief counsel at the League of Women Voters.

Digitally-altered photos are surprisingly easy for even the layperson with the right software to create. Photos of former President Donald Trump being hauled off in handcuffs were easy to expose as fake to those who know what they are looking for. But many don’t yet know, and in the case of images that serve their agenda, aren’t too interested in

finding out. If people were slow to fact-check before reposting or sharing information before, the barriers to verifying a source have gotten even higher.

And the viral nature of the sharing of information (and misinformation) makes the stakes quite high. AI-generated images are being weaponized in the Israel-Hamas war, with images generated to inflame emotions and deliberately mislead.

It’s not just in politics that digitally altered media is being deployed to serve a certain agenda. Some are calling the Israel-Hamas war the first AI war. In March, a digitally-altered image purported to show Israeli Defense Forces soldiers holding an ISIS flag alongside an Israeli flag, clearly designed to mislead and provoke. The original photograph, posted by the IDF in 2023 on X (formerly Twitter) in fact, showed the soldiers with Golani Patrol and Israeli flags. But the recirculated photo amassed hundreds of thousands of views and triggered viral outrage.

But the consequences of rapid misuse of this technology extend beyond the direct results of any one particular audio, image or video. The presence of AI-generated misinformation can make it challenging for the public to separate truths from lies. They can erode our trust in information, leading us to question the authenticity of all online content, even disregarding reliable sources. Such difficulty erodes trust in

credible sources and exacerbates the decline in confidence in democratic institutions, contributing to greater political division.

But let’s not lose sight of the creative abilities of AI when used ethically. If you need a pick-me up after reading what may feel like a doom-and-gloom article, I encourage you to enjoy my latest obsession: Billy Joel’s AI-generated official video to his newly released single, “Turn the Lights Back On,” in which he is shown singing the new song as himself over the years. It’s delightful and for those two minutes, it’s a pleasure to suspend disbelief.

As we navigate the evolving landscape of artificial intelligence, balancing our awe of its capabilities with vigilance against its misuse becomes more important than ever. By educating ourselves to the signs of AI-generated content and exercising caution before sharing and re-posting, we play an important role in safeguarding the integrity of our digital world. And as we marvel at the wonders of AI, like the captivating journey through Billy Joel’s career, let’s appreciate the technology for the joy and creativity it brings into our lives, all the while staying grounded in the responsibility we bear as participants in this digital age. Together, we can enjoy the benefits of AI while ensuring it serves to unite rather than divide, enlighten rather than deceive.

Shira

Shabbat Candle Lighting Times

(28226 Zip Code. For other locations, visit www.charlottejewishnews.org.)

- April 5 — 7:30 p.m.
- April 12 — 7:36 p.m.
- April 19 — 7:42 p.m.
- April 26 — 7:47 p.m.

Levine-Sklut Judaic Library Hours

Monday	8 AM - 4 PM
Tuesday	8 AM - 4 PM
Wednesday	8 AM - 8 PM
Thursday	8 AM - 4 PM
Friday	8 AM - 1 PM
Sunday	9 AM - 1 PM

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Federation's Lion-Pom Luncheon Highlights Women's Philanthropy

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

The Lion-Pom Luncheon, hosted at Duke Mansion this February, highlighted the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte's dedication to women's leadership and philanthropy. Chaired by Lynne Sheffer and Kara Culp of the Lion of Judah and Pomegranate Society respectively, the event featured engaging discussions and speeches that emphasized community and philanthropic impact.

The Lion of Judah and Pomegranate giving societies are two affinity groups within Women's Philanthropy, a division of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte (JFGC).

The luncheon kicked off with opening remarks and a warm welcome from the chairs. As the afternoon unfolded, Lisa Levinson's poignant recounting of her experience on the recent Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte Solidarity Mission to Israel touched hearts and underscored the profound connections forged through shared experiences. It served as a powerful reminder of the importance of solidarity and



Carolyn Gitlin

support, both within our community and beyond.

Carolyn Gitlin, immediate past chair of National Women's Philanthropy of the Jewish Federations of North America, graced the stage as the main speaker of the day. Her insights shed light on the pivotal role played by women in leadership roles, particularly in times of crisis.

Throughout the luncheon, attendees were given the chance to engage in meaningful discussions, reflecting on the messages shared and sharing their own thoughts and experiences as fe-

male leaders in our community. It was a celebration of empowerment and unity, illustrating the strength that comes from lifting each other up during challenging times.

Reflecting on this event's success reminds us of the incredible opportunities that await those who engage with Women's Philanthropy initiatives. Women philanthropists are the architects of change in our community. Guided by the traditions of tzedakah and tikkun olam, the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte's Women's Philanthropy is dedicated to the continuity, connectivity, and thriving future of the Charlotte Jewish community, Israel, and the Jewish people.

Today, women donors account for more than one third of Federation's Annual Campaign, showcasing the significant impact women are making in our community, but Women's Philanthropy goes beyond just the Annual Campaign. It's about understanding the breadth of issues facing our community and actively working to address them. It's about educating, inspiring, and empowering women



Lisa Levinson

of all ages, nurturing leadership, and fostering a commitment to philanthropy.

Federation invites women from all walks of life to join us in our mission to better the

greater Charlotte Jewish community. Together, we can make a meaningful difference, creating a brighter and more vibrant future for generations to come.

For more information about Lions of Judah, Pomegranate Society, or Women's Philanthropy, please email Elina Mazo at elina.mazo@jewishcharlotte.org.



Levine-Sklut Judaic Library

(Continued from front page)

Families will delight in the renovated children's room, offering age-appropriate zones for reading, studying, lounging, and playful exploration. Enhance your productivity with two dedicated focus rooms for individual work or study, a collaborative workspace for meetings, and The Blumenthal Educator Resource Center — all available for reservation online.

The Levine-Sklut Judaic Library will be the host site for a diverse line-up of recurring programming and other events. Storytime with Miss Debby will be held in the children's room on various dates. Shabbat Shaboom and Baby and Me sessions will alternate on Friday mornings at 10:30 a.m. in the children's room. Also, starting April 10, on the second Wednesday of each month, the library will be hosting new Board Game Café nights from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Come and enjoy games for all ages, complimentary drinks, and sweet treats. Food from rotating food truck vendors will also be available for purchase.

The Grand Reopening marks not just the beginning of a new chapter for the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library, but a reaffirmation of its role as a vibrant hub of learning, exploration, and connection for the entire community. Visit online at www.jewishcharlotte.org/cje to view



Patrons sign up for new library cards.



Younger patron enjoys the renovated children's room.

the new extended library hours, reserve meeting spaces, check out e-books, sign up for your library card, and more.



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Yom Ha'Atzmaut

Israeli Independence

May 15
5 – 8 PM
at Shalom Park

On Yom Ha'Atzmaut, we reflect and celebrate amidst the echoes of October 7, reaffirming our resilience and quest for peace. This day honors the courage of those who safeguard the State of Israel. Let's embrace Yom Ha'Atzmaut as a symbol of our hope and strength as a Jewish people.

Federation’s JCRC: Distinguishing Between Antisemitism and Political Discourse

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

At the beginning of this year, The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported a national surge in antisemitism, with incidents increasing by an alarming 360% compared to the same period one year prior. “The American Jewish community is facing a threat level that’s now unprecedented in modern history,” said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL CEO. “It’s shocking that we’ve recorded more antisemitic acts in three months than we usually would in an entire year.”

This trend has not spared our greater Charlotte community. For many of us as American Jews, this is the first time we have experienced such overt levels of

antisemitic rhetoric. This leads us to question how we can distinguish between legitimate political criticism and hate speech, and when it’s necessary to speak out.

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), the advocacy and public affairs arm of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte (JFGC), collaborates closely with the ADL to monitor and respond to antisemitic incidents in our area. Moreover, the JCRC leads the Federation’s Outshine Hate initiative, offering vital programming and resources available on the JFGC website (jewishcharlotte.org). These resources include informative articles that serve as guides for identifying and addressing antisemitic speech, instructions for

reporting antisemitism, contact information for local lawmakers, toolkits, and more, all helping to empower individuals to effectively combat antisemitism.

Understanding the fine line between vocalizing legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitic rhetoric is crucial. One valuable resource available to our community is the definition of antisemitism provided by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). This definition expands beyond mere hatred of Jews to encompass targeting Israel as a Jewish state. However, they clarify that criticism of Israel akin to critiques leveled against any other country is not inherently antisemitic. This distinction is vital in navigating conversations around the Israel-Hamas war, where expressions like “Free Palestine” can carry nuanced meanings, depending on the intent behind them.

So, what do we do when we

“The American Jewish community is facing a threat level that’s now unprecedented in modern history,” said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL CEO. “It’s shocking that we’ve recorded more antisemitic acts in three months than we usually would in an entire year.”

hear antisemitism? When encountering potentially antisemitic remarks, engaging in peaceful dialogue is a constructive first step. Sharing our perspectives can illuminate why certain statements may be perceived as harmful to Jewish people. The JCRC provides guidance and support for these conversations, highlighting the power of informed discourse in combating prejudice. Beyond personal di-

alogue, it is important to report acts of antisemitism to the JCRC. By reporting these incidents, we contribute to the collective effort to identify trends, educate law enforcement officials and elected representatives, and advocate for stronger protections against antisemitic speech.

The recent rise in antisemitism underscores the urgency of our collective efforts. By leveraging the JCRC’s resources and engaging in meaningful dialogue we can strengthen our community’s resilience against hate. Together, let us stand united in combating antisemitism, committed to creating a safer, more inclusive environment for all members of the greater Charlotte Jewish community.

For more information or to report an incident, contact Douglas Greene, JFGC government relations and public affairs associate at douglas.greene@jewishcharlotte.org.

Strengthening Jewish Identity: Federation Partners With The iCenter

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

In today’s ever-changing world, nurturing a deep and meaningful connection between young Jews and Israel is of critical importance. This connection must be built on genuine relationships, shared values, and a personal understanding of Israeli culture. Recognizing this need, the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, through its Outshine Hate initiative, has forged a partnership with The iCenter, a renowned organization dedicated to transforming Israel education across North America through workshops with teens and educators alike.

The most recent workshops held in March were made with the intention of teaching different viewpoints, understanding the discourse that can arise from having them, and connecting these understandings to discussions surrounding Israel. Teen participants sat in a session utilizing a resource called “values in tension,” which looks at the tension that can arise between individuals from potentially conflicting personal values, such as democracy and safety, and how we can use this tension to further constructive conversations.

The workshop for educators focused on the timeline of Israeli history and the differing perspectives that might exist on each

major event, allowing attendees to use a more worldly approach to teaching and discussing Israel as a whole. By bringing The iCenter workshops and programs to Charlotte, our educators will have access to cutting-edge resources and strategies designed to enhance Israel education in the classroom and beyond.

The iCenter stands at the forefront of Israel education, inspiring and supporting a vast network of educators and teens across various settings, including day schools, public schools, summer camps, synagogues, and universities. Through workshops, training sessions, and tailored programs, The iCenter equips educators to teach the multifaceted narratives of Israel while fostering critical thinking and empathy among students.

In a world where the bonds between Jewish communities in the U.S. and Israel are continually evolving, partnerships like the one between the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte and The iCenter are invaluable. By engaging educators and the next generation, Federation and The iCenter are shaping the future of Jewish education and laying the foundation for a vibrant and resilient Jewish community in greater Charlotte.

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Sue's Bookshelf



By Sue Littauer

It's time to get ready for Pass-over! If you are hosting a seder, in addition to being in charge of the food shopping, the menu, and the beautiful table settings, you have to consider your guest list. Who will you invite this year? I've been thinking about this very question as it relates to the last three books I've read recently: "Family Family" by Laurie Frankel, "Don't Forget to Write" by Sara Goodman Confino, and "Stockholm: A Novel" by Noa Yedlin. These are three books that I highly recommend.

"Family Family" is another home run for Laurie Frankel, author of "This Is How It Always

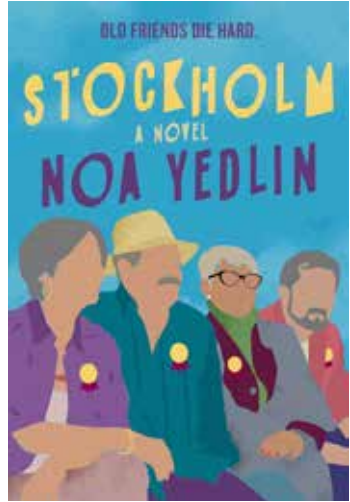


Is." "Without giving away too much of her dizzying plot, which is supercharged with cliffhanger chapter endings and parallel reveals, the novel is dedicated to the premise that not every adoption story is one of trauma." – *Kirkus Book Reviews*. I have great admiration for the main character, India Allwood, and find the rest of the characters to be well-developed, endearing, and resourceful. I would love to invite the entire family to my seder so I could observe their interactions firsthand.

My next guest would be

great-aunt Ada, Philadelphia's premiere matchmaker from the book "Don't Forget to Write." She's akin to that strict teacher who initially made your life miserable at the beginning of the school year but turned out to be your favorite of all time by the end. Her witticisms, criticisms, and interactions with the children in "Family Family" are jaw-dropping and highly entertaining.

By this point, I have nine guests lined up, plus my own children and grandchildren, so



it's a good thing that I wouldn't invite anyone from "Stockholm: A Novel." The book is full of unlikeable characters. Although I can't get the book out of my mind, I wouldn't like to meet any of them.

"A hilarious and profound exploration of mortality, this novel begins with the death of Avishay Sar-Shalom, a renowned economics professor and a possible candidate for the Nobel Prize in economics. Because the Nobel Prize is given only to those who are alive at the time of the announcement, Avishay's four best friends decide to keep his

death a secret for a week until the prize committee in Sweden makes its decision. As the pressure of being discovered mounts, and Avishay's body steadily decomposes in the background, the reader is thrown headfirst into a wonderfully macabre, slapstick adventure." – Omer Friedlander, author of "The Man Who Sold Air in the Holy Land."

Well, my table is full! Now, on to preparing the charoset, matzo ball soup, brisket, matzo kugel, asparagus, pineapple, strawberries, and the flourless chocolate cake!

The next Center for Jewish Education Book Club Meeting is Wednesday, May 8, at 10:30 a.m. in Room 110 at Shalom Park. We will be discussing "Signal Fires" by Dani Shapiro. All registered Levine-Sklut Jewish Library users are welcome to join. For more information, please contact sueb.littauer@jewishcharlotte.org





YOM HAZIKARON

National Remembrance Day

May 13

6:00 – 7:30 PM

in the Sam Lerner Center for Cultural Arts

Join us as we unite in heart and spirit for our community-wide Yom HaZikaron commemoration. Together, we will honor the bravery and sacrifice of Israel's fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism, keeping their memories alive in solemn reflection and gratitude. This special gathering offers a moment to remember the victims of Oct. 7, connect with our people, and the profound sacrifices made.

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Center for Jewish Education Book Club Schedule

January 10	Incident at San Miguel	A.J. Sidransky
February 14	Don't Forget to Write	Sara Goodman Confino
March 13	Bessie	Linda Kass
April 10	Once We Were Home	Jennifer Rosner
May 8	Signal Fires	Dani Shapiro
June 12	In observance of the holiday of Shavuot, Shalom Park will be closed. No book club meeting this month.	
July 10	The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store	James McBride
August 14	The Marriage Box	Corie Adjmi
September 11	Family Family	Laurie Frankel
October 9	The Wolf Hunt	Ayelet Gundar-Goshen
November 13	Leaving Eastern Parkway	Matthew Daub
December 11	Stockholm: A Novel	Noa Yedlin

All meetings are on Wednesdays at 10:30 AM
 All community members are welcome to attend.

For more information about the CJE Book Club, please contact sueb.litauer@jewishcharlotte.org.



Jewish Federation
of Greater Charlotte



FEDERATION IMPACT: BENEFICIARY AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

CHARLOTTE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

As a means of bettering our greater Charlotte Jewish community, the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte allocates funds from the Annual Campaign to local Jewish organizations that embody Jewish values and overall better our community. In recognition of their work, Federation wishes to bring attention to these organizations and the good that they do.

With a steadfast commitment to fostering Jewish values, nurturing lifelong learners, and cultivating a deep connection to Israel and the global Jewish community, the Charlotte Jewish Day School (CJDS) stands as a beacon of excellence in Jewish identity and education, values that the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte (JFGC) has at its core principles.

CJDS started small, back in 1988. At one point occupying trailers atop the hill that is now the Shalom Park parking garage, they have since expanded into state of the art classrooms complete with access to amenities like 3D printers, a podcast room, and a hydroponic garden.



At CJDS, the vision extends far beyond academic achievement. Aligned with the mission of JFGC, the school's curriculum and extracurricular activities aim to instill a deep sense of Jewish pride and responsibility among its students, empowering them to embrace Jewish values in education and in life. CJDS places a strong emphasis on reinforcing Jewish identity and strengthening connections to Israel, which is now more important than ever in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war.

"Knowledge and education

are critical to be able to decipher all of the static and the background noise today," said Gale Osborne, advancement director at CJDS. "We have to give them a solid foundation of how to think and how to understand what the truth is. That is the gift we give them."

The Charlotte Jewish Day School stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Jewish education and identity. CJDS empowers generations of students to embrace their heritage, pursue knowledge with passion, and make meaningful contributions to the Jewish community and the world at large. With each graduate, CJDS strengthens the fabric of our Jewish community, ensuring a bright and promising future for generations to come.

cjds
Charlotte Jewish Day School

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Federation Welcomes Israeli Artist-in-Residence

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

Robbie Gringras, a renowned solo theater performer, playwright, and inspirational speaker, visited Charlotte in February as part of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte’s Israeli Artist-in-Residence program. This initiative, aimed at deepening the community’s connection with Israeli culture, brought Robbie’s unique blend of performance and educational workshops to our community.

As this year’s Israeli Artist-in-Residence, Robbie premiered a meaningful performance titled “Come Sit with Me” alongside multi-instrumentalist, Adam Mader. This show delves into the profound meaning behind Israeli songs, illustrating how certain popular hits have acquired new interpretations following the October 7 attacks. Our Charlotte audience had the privilege of experiencing the debut of “Come Sit with Me.”

The Israeli Artist-in-Residence program stands as a pivotal component of the Jewish Federation of Greater Char-



Robbie Gringras and Adam Mader take the stage for the premier of “Come Sit With Me.”

lotte’s commitment to fostering a deep understanding of and forging meaningful connections with the State of Israel within the greater Charlotte community. By engaging with Israeli artists like

Gringras, community members gain invaluable insights into the diverse narratives and realities shaping Israeli identity.

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Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Day Community Commemoration

Sunday, May 5 4-5:30pm

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at Shalom Park**

Join us to remember those who perished in the Holocaust, to honor the survivors in our Charlotte community, and to experience a powerfully moving performance of excerpts (with narration) from Carolyn Dorfman's acclaimed Legacy Project: A Dance of Hope. Founded by Artistic Director Carolyn Dorfman, a child of Holocaust survivors, this nationally and internationally respected contemporary modern dance company is based in New Jersey and New York City.

Carolyn Dorfman Dance will be in residence in Charlotte for Holocaust Education and Awareness Week.

"The Legacy Project: A Dance of Hope is about Survival, Resilience, and Memory." It is a tribute to her parents' survival and gives voice to those who were silenced in the Holocaust.

This event is free and open to the public but for planning purposes we would appreciate if you could register at www.templebethel.org or scan the QR Code.



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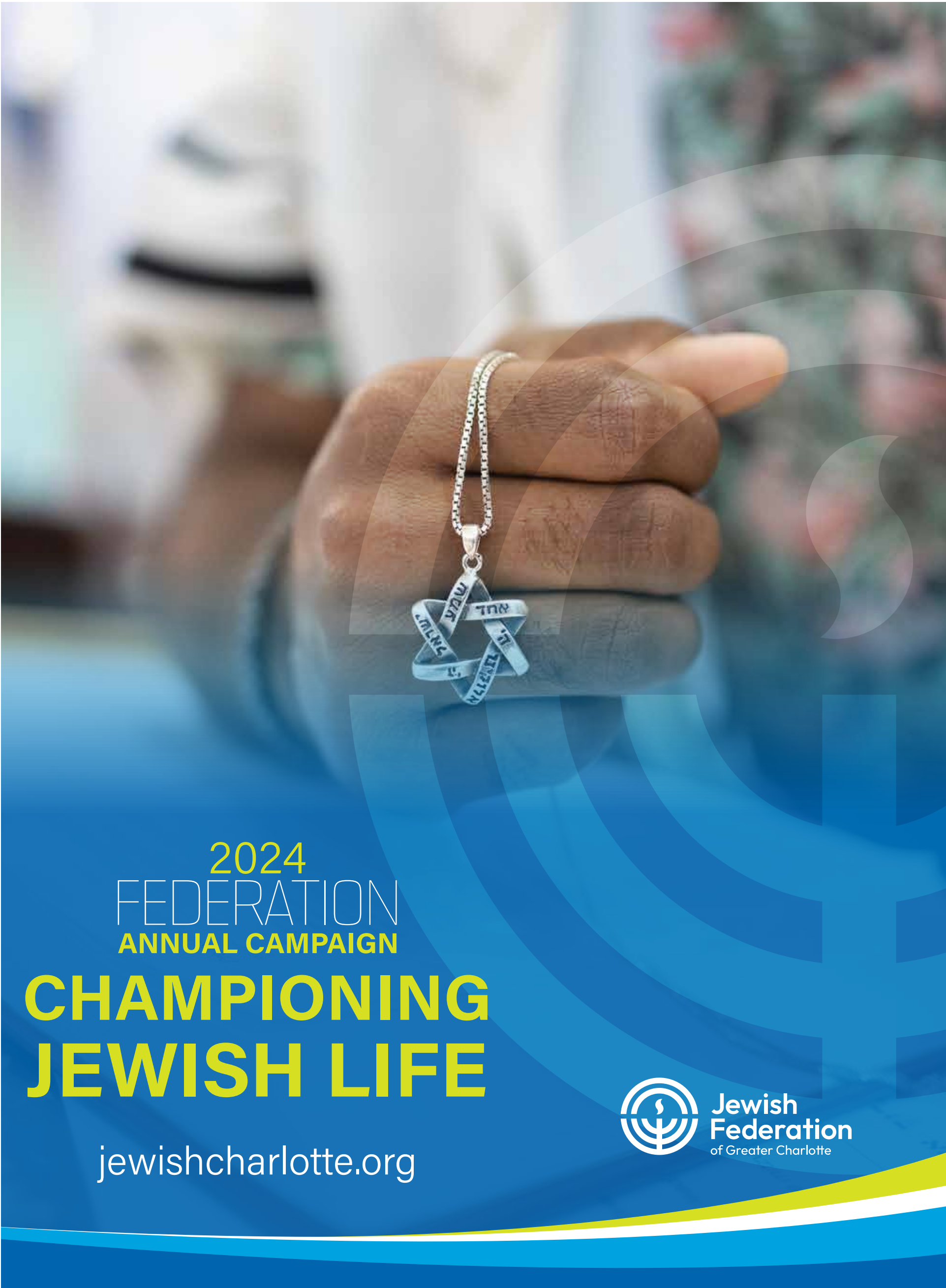
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Beyond the Pink Runway: A Night of Empowerment and Elegance

By Shira Firestone

The inaugural Beyond the Pink Runway Breast Cancer Fundraiser, held on March 2, at Queens University of Charlotte's Sandra Levine Theatre, was a resounding testament to the strength, resilience, and beauty of young women battling breast cancer. This landmark event benefited the Sandra Levine Young Women's Breast Cancer Program at Atrium Health Levine Cancer, which has been a beacon of hope and support for young women since its inception in 2017.

The evening was conceived of and co-chaired by Dr. Lejla Hadzikadic-Gusic, a renowned oncology breast surgeon and co-director of the program, and Sandra Goldman, director of the Hebrew Cemetery and a fervent breast cancer advocate. Their shared passion for supporting young breast cancer survivors and empowering them through fashion and camaraderie brought this unique event to life and raised over \$150,000.

Together, they opened the evening's program by welcoming the audience with their heartfelt gratitude. Dr. Hadzikadic-Gusic, expressed her appreciation for the program's benefactors and the transformative impact it has had on over 800 women since its inception in 2017. She shared her personal motivation for the event, emphasizing the power of reclaiming self-expression and dignity amidst the battle with breast cancer. "You are thrown into this world that you never wanted to be in... It can take so much away at times, dignity, control, sexuality, a sense of 'self'," she remarked. Quoting iconic figures such as Audrey Hepburn and Coco Chanel, she underscored the significance of resilience and radiance in the face of adversity. "I wanted our ladies today to have this moment of power and energy and fabulousness back and I hope this moment in time stays with them



Sandra Levine receiving the inaugural Beyond the Pink Runway Award and co-chairs, Dr. Lejla Hadzikadic-Gusic and Sandra Goldman

forever. "

Sandra Goldman then recounted the serendipitous collaboration that led to the creation of Beyond the Pink Runway. "Dr. Hadzikadic-Gusic and I met just over a year ago at a speaking engagement and I was impressed with this powerhouse of a woman and realized quickly how our visions and dreams aligned. Shortly after, I dedicated funds raised through a skydive to one of her research projects. When we got together again, she confided in me how she always had dreamed about a fashion show with patients. Having run some fundraisers in the past, I was intrigued and said 'let's do it!' Goldman and Dr. Hadzikadic-Gusic embarked on a journey to realize their dream of showcasing the strength and beauty of young breast cancer survivors through the transformative power of fashion.

Together, they called up on stage Sandra Levine to honor her for making this program possible and for the impact she made on young women affected by breast cancer. Her dedication created a sanctuary for those grappling with the complexity of breast cancer, offering not

just solace but also a profound sense of hope, strength, and empowerment, fostering a one-of-a-kind community bound by their shared journey.

The evening included a cocktail hour, where guests enjoyed delicious hors d'oeuvres and perused silent auction items, all set against the soulful backdrop of jazz melodies provided by Middle C Jazz. This set the stage for an extraordinary showcase of fashion and fortitude. Ambiance was set by Creative Events of Charlotte.

With WBTV News anchor Mary King guiding the proceedings, attendees were treated to a mesmerizing display of courage

and camaraderie as ten young breast cancer survivors took to the runway to the tune of their favorite song alongside their favorite doctors and nurses. Each poignant moment was preceded by a moving video showcasing the journey and resilience of these remarkable individuals.

The fashion show was a vibrant display of courage and elegance, featuring breast cancer survivors in outfits styled by Veronica Beard and Renata Gasparin. Local artist Lorie Arthur transformed the healthcare providers coats and scrubs into unique pieces, incorporating each participant's three favorite words, colors, and symbols. This customization highlighted the deep connections formed in adversity, adding a personal touch that underscored the night's themes of solidarity and empowerment.

As the evening drew to a close, guests participated in a live auction, led by David Gerard, further demonstrating their commitment to supporting the Sandra Levine Young Women's Breast Cancer Program and its mission of empowerment and healing.

Beyond the Pink Runway Fashion Show Fundraiser was more than just an event; it was a celebration of resilience, a testament to the power of community, and a beacon of hope for all those affected by breast cancer. The Beyond the Pink Runway event

underscored the vital work of the Sandra Levine Young Women's Breast Cancer Program, which offers support for young women since its inception in 2017, ensuring that they have access to tailored services, including genetic counseling, fertility preservation, peer support groups, integrative oncology, and more. The evening not only raised significant funds for the program but also highlighted the unbreakable bonds between patients and their caregivers, showcasing the collective strength of the community in the face of adversity.

Looking ahead, the overwhelming success of the event and the positive feedback from attendees have sparked discussions about making Beyond the Pink Runway an annual affair. The organizing committee, buoyed by the support and enthusiasm of the community, is already contemplating how to build on this year's success to continue making a difference in the lives of young breast cancer survivors.

For those inspired to contribute to the ongoing efforts of the Sandra Levine Young Women's Breast Cancer Program, donations are still being accepted. Your support can help extend the reach of this vital program, ensuring that more young women have access to the care, resources, and community they need to navigate their breast cancer journey.



Co-chairs Dr. Lejla Hadzikadic-Gusic and Sandra Goldman





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Bringing Laughter for a Cause: Modi Rosenfeld Headlines Live Laugh Give 2024

By Julie Loftis, JFS Marketing Specialist

In today's world, where challenges abound, humor often emerges as a powerful remedy. Jewish Family Services (JFS) presents an annual fundraising event, Live Laugh Give comedy night, aimed at spreading joy while supporting a noble cause. Scheduled for June 9, this event celebrates the contributions of honorees Jerry and Barbara Levin, showcases JFS programs, includes a live auction, and features a comedy performance by Modi Rosenfeld, a well-known comedian.

Modi, known for his sharp wit and engaging humor, will entertain the audience with his blend of observational comedy and storytelling. Voted one of the top 10 comedians in New York City by The Hollywood Reporter, Modi is one of the comedy circuit's most sought after performers. Featured on HBO, CBS, NBC, ABC, Comedy Central, Howard Stern, and E! Entertainment, Modi has received rave reviews in The New York Times, Time Out NY and The New York Post. Born in Tel Aviv, Israel, Modi immigrated with his family to the United States at the age of seven and was raised on Long Island. After graduating from Boston University, he worked as an investment banker until his first open-mic night made him realize that stand-up was his true calling.



Modi Rosenfeld

Equipped with a sharp wit and a knack for reading an audience, Modi has gone on to become a successful fixture in New York's vibrant comedy scene, often doing bits that incorporate his heritage, and he is a hit with diverse Jewish audiences as well as fans of all backgrounds and beliefs. With a career spanning over two decades, Modi has established himself as a prominent figure in

the comedy scene, performing at various prestigious venues worldwide.

Modi has played himself on HBO's "Crashing" and Netflix's "When Jews Were Funny." He's also appeared in several feature films and played leading roles in two: "Waiting for Woody Allen," which won the LA Film Festival, and "Stand Up," a feature-length film. In 2018, Mayor Bill De Bla-

sio declared June 26 Mordechi Modi Rosenfeld Day in the city of New York for his accomplishments and contributions to the artistic community.

Beyond providing entertainment, Modi sees comedy as a means to effect positive change. His participation in events like Live Laugh Give underscores his belief in the power of laughter to make a difference.

Each year a highlight of the event has been the live auction, offering a range of experiences and memorabilia and this year is no different. Previous auction winners have expressed their enjoyment using the auction items they won. For instance, Leon and Jennifer Golynsky cherished their auction-winning trip to stay in an upscale mountain home, knowing that their bid supported vital community initiatives. Similarly, Kevin Levine and Louis Sinkoe valued their experience

and autographed memorabilia from a Charlotte FC game, not just for its significance but also for the contribution it made to the JFS Food Pantry.

Modi's concept of "mashiach energy" reflects a belief in the importance of kindness, empathy, and love in driving positive actions. Regardless of religious connotations, embracing mashiach energy entails engaging in good deeds and fostering a positive impact on those around us. Modi emphasizes the significance of kindness in creating a better world, echoing the sentiment that laughter and goodwill can truly make a difference in people's lives.



Jewish Family Services Volunteers & Donors February 2024

Volunteers: Jessica Alfandary, Marcia Arnholt, Mike Arnholt, Daniel Benjamin, Andrew Bernstein, Dan Coblenz, Jonathan Collman, Andrea Cronson, Julie Dermack, Joni Deutsch, Sheryl Effren, Rachel Friedman, Robert Friedman, Meredith Gartner, Marty Goldfarb, Richard Goldsmith, Jennifer Golynsky, Gail Halverson, Rebecca Hockfield, Oren Hubara, Tara Hubara, Dawn Hubbs, Bob Jacobson, Rikki Kinitzky, Etti Krausse, Jennifer Koss, Elliot and Stephanie Kreitman, Marcia Lampert, Eric Lerner, Kim Levy, Adina Loewensteiner, Matt Luftglass, Frada Mozentzer, Wendy Petricoff, Barbara Rein, Nina Rose, Marilyn Schuster, Stuart Singer, Harry Sparks, Lorin Steifel, Steve Teich, Gail Vogel, Nancy Wielunski, Amanda Zaidman

Mitzvah/Bima Baskets: The

Aranda family in honor of Evan Aranda's bar mitzvah, The Waller family in honor of Andrew Waller's bar mitzvah

Hadassah Meal Preppies: Gina Bonfiglio, June and Paul Hirschmann, Yvette Jacobson, Penny Krieger

Shalom Green: Thank to all Shalom Green volunteers for providing fresh produce to our pantry clients.

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 February 2024

Happy Birthday
Marcia Lampert
Alan and Merle Gottheim
Warren and Mary Lynn Sepkowitz

In Appreciation of
Linda Ashendorf
Floyd and Brenda Patten
Matt and Alisha Dreese
Stan Greenspon
Burton and Michelle Horwitz
Stan Greenspon

In Honor of
Marcia Lampert
Ann Macon-Ellis
In Memory of
Jean Finkelstein

Robin Finkelstein
Bella Greenfield
Russ and Julia Greenfield
Jon Holmes
Paul and Lynn Edelstein
Shirley Prystowsky
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Shalom Park Hosts Pinwheel Garden to Raise Awareness for Child Abuse Prevention



By Howard Olshansky, JFS Executive Director
If you drive onto the Shalom Park campus and notice a “Garden of Pinwheels” in front of the parking garage, those pinwheels commemorate Child Abuse Pre-

vention Awareness Month. The pinwheel, inherently whimsical and cheerful, signifies the belief that all children deserve a safe and joyful childhood. Annually, our community installs this pinwheel garden to underscore

the critical need to prevent child abuse and neglect. Child abuse is a complex and widespread issue that crosses geographical, cultural, and socioeconomic lines. It includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and neglect.

In North Carolina, 2023 saw 19,639 confirmed cases of child abuse and/or neglect. Across the U.S., annually, over 600,000 children face some form of abuse or neglect. Discussions on child abuse often evoke horrifying images of physical harm or sexual assault. While these instances do occur, they represent only a fraction of abuse and neglect cases. Notably, 76% of child protection cases are due to neglect. It's crucial to understand that neglect, while serious and potentially damaging, is often not the result of a caregiver's intent to harm. Many situations leading to neglect are preventable, highlighting the importance of awareness and prevention efforts in addressing the broader spectrum of child abuse.

Let's begin by understanding child neglect. There are four types of child neglect:

- Physical neglect. A child's basic needs, such as food, clothing, or

shelter, are not met or they aren't properly supervised or kept safe.

- Educational neglect. A parent doesn't ensure their child is given an education.

- Emotional neglect. A child doesn't get the nurture and stimulation they need. This could be through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating, or isolating them.
- Medical neglect. A child isn't given proper health care. This includes dental care and refusing or ignoring medical recommendations.

Let's examine some primary reasons for child neglect. Neglect often stems from a mix of poor parenting skills, inadequate stress management, unsupportive family environments, and challenging life situations. Parental substance abuse is another significant contributor to neglect. These factors help explain why most neglect cases involve children under one year old.

Given these causes, there is hope through programs and interventions designed to prevent neglect. Initiatives like visiting nurse programs for first-time parents, case management services for single parents, and substance abuse treatment programs that

focus on the parent-child relationship offer vital support. Additionally, professionals in schools, childcare centers, and healthcare settings play a crucial role in identifying early signs of neglect, providing an essential safety net for at-risk children.

However, neglect is more difficult to identify than abuse, leading to hesitancy in reporting or addressing it, even among those mandated to report suspected abuse or neglect. This reluctance can result in missed opportunities for early intervention and support, potentially escalating to severe neglect and the child's removal from their home into the foster care system. As someone with extensive experience in the Child Welfare system, I can attest that this is an outcome we strive to avoid.

So, when you pass by the Pinwheel Garden, let it be a reminder of the importance of supporting and advocating for measures that provide parents with the tools and resources they need to care for and protect their children. Because every child deserves a safe and happy childhood!

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Happy Passover

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Wednesday, April 17
12:00pm at TBE
Register by April 14

Red Sea Ramble Hike
Tuesday, April 23
10:30am at James Boyce Park

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Tuesday, April 23
4:30pm Family Service
6:00pm Community-Wide
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celebrate **Passover**

Happy Passover

From the Bimah

Celebrating Freedom Amidst Grief



By Rabbi Becca Diamond,
Temple Kol Tikvah

This has been a heavy year for all of us. Simchat Torah, a day full of joy where happiness is literally in the title, was marred by tragedy and terrorism, and since then, it has been hard to know how to deal with the pain and loss and grief that

has followed. I have felt the heaviness in the lives of my congregants, and in the inability to find respite from the difficult conversations about what is going on in Israel.

And now, here we are, at another holiday that is based on joy and celebration. While Simchat Torah is focused on the joy of Torah, Passover reminds us of the joy of freedom. But how do we celebrate joy in this dark season? How do we observe a festival of freedom when we remember those held captive? Unlike the common aphorism, I don't believe it is right to look on the bright side of things or find the silver lining in every difficulty. Sometimes there is no silver lining, and to look at the bright side may be hurtful to someone experiencing grief.

But we can find some lessons on how to celebrate this season in the Passover Seder itself.

Along with freedom, there are themes in our seder about the renewal that comes with spring and reminders of new green growth and rebirth. One of those reminders is the karpas, which is often parsley. On its own, the karpas is a fresh, springy green, but we don't eat it on its own. We dip it in water made salty and we say it represents the tears of our ancestors and the bitterness of slavery. We mix the bright and the salty together and eat it as one. Later on in the seder, we eat the Hillel sandwich, a mixture of matzah, charoset, and horseradish. The charoset is meant to symbolize the bricks and mortar used by Israelites slaves in Egypt. Al-

though the symbolism is full of sadness, each bite of charoset is filled with sweet honey and cinnamon and wine and apple and the crunch of walnuts in a delightful mixture that brings a smile to my face as I eat it. We mix it with maror, horseradish, which is a bitter herb, to remember the bitterness of slavery. In these symbols, the lesson I take away is one of complexity. Sadness and joy, grief and exuberance can exist side by side and often in the same moment. Bitterness tempers the sweet just like sadness softens joy, and the sweet balances the salty just like celebration eases grief. One does not erase the other or overpower the other, but they exist in harmony and even in complement one another, side by side in the same bite and in

the same moments.

This year at our Passover table we will know more than ever about this experience of mixing emotions and complexity of feelings. Let our grief not crowd out our joy, and let our happiness not push aside our sadness. Rather, we bring all of our feelings to the seder table in all of their complexity. And when we reach the end of the seder this year, we shall say, next year in Jerusalem, next year in peace.



The Challenge in Finding Freedom



By Rabbi Yossi Groner,
Congregation Ohr HaTorah

"Passover is the time of our liberation," says the Jewish prayer book. On the night of Passover, we conduct a seder to celebrate our freedom. A freedom which is cherished as a sacred G-d given right to humanity. This freedom originated during the original Passover, marking our ancestors exodus from Egypt. As we recite in the Haggadah, if not for this night, we would still be slaves in Egypt.

This raises the question, what defines freedom? Is it freedom from slavery? Freedom from tyranny? Many of us in the Jewish community today have not experienced external forms of slavery or tyranny. So how do we celebrate our freedom?

In truth, there is a form of slavery and tyranny that can be more oppressive than the conventional form of slavery. That would be

a slavery that arises from within us. It can be on many levels from extreme as addictions which are visibly destructive vices or a dependency on outside approval or not being able to break an unhealthy habit.

Internal slavery can be more damaging than external slavery. Loss of internal freedom can destroy the inner essence of a person more than external slavery. It causes us to lose the sense of our real identity and it can be quite intimidating when we cannot express our true feelings.

It is interesting to note that people who are free on the inside are free on the outside as well. To mention a few well known Jewish heroes who displayed unabashed heroism under the most oppressive circumstance, see Victor Frankel, Natan Sharansky and most of all the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yossef Yitzchok Schneerson who stood alone against the mighty Soviet Regime in his valiant fight to keep the Jewish flame alive.

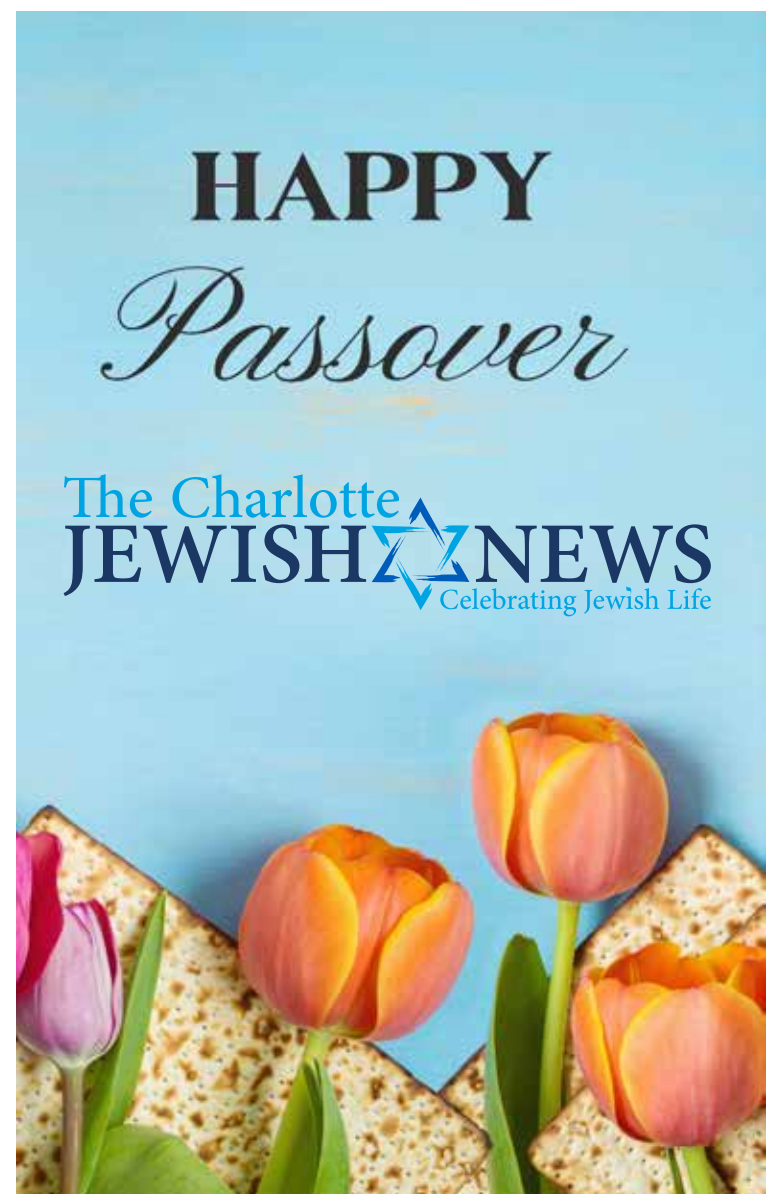
Today, after October 7, we in the Jewish community are in a precarious situation. The anti-Israel rhetoric is increasing at an alarming rate. Jews world-wide are despised for Israel's legitimate actions of self-defense. Some people are intimidated by all this noise that they are afraid to identify in public with Israel.

Others are questioning themselves and are unsure of where they stand on this issue and pray that it should just disappear.

True freedom means that we are in synch with our G-d given soul. That we allow those deep spiritual feelings which are found in the hidden recesses of our soul to emerge and shout out loud so the whole world can hear: "I am a Jew, and I am proud!"

True freedom is that we feel confident when we wear a Jewish symbol in public or a pin that reads "I stand with Israel." True freedom is that we are in full solidarity with the people in Israel. True freedom is when our decisions are persuaded by Torah insights. True freedom is when we have clarity of vision of what is expected of us as a member of the Jewish community.

This year the quest for freedom is more meaningful and poignant. On Passover, when we celebrate our freedom from bondage, let us resolve to be truly free and to proclaim proudly: "Am Yisrael Chai" and that this coming year in Jerusalem.



The Charlotte
JEWISH NEWS
Celebrating Jewish Life



From Darkness to Deliverance: Embracing Passover's Promise



By Rabbi Asher Knight,
Temple Beth El

As we gather around our Passover Seder tables this year, the reverberations of the war in Gaza amplify the anguish felt by so many Jewish families across Israel and the world. The void left by absent loved ones — whether

killed in the conflict, serving in the military, or held captive — casts a profound emptiness that touches us all. If not directly affected, we can certainly imagine ourselves in the position of those who suffer. Additionally, the long shadow of antisemitism adds layers of somber awareness. The path to freedom and deliverance is a journey we are collectively undertaking this year.

In moments of profound darkness and uncertainty, the Passover narrative emerges with a unique resonance. Rooted in the ancient tale of liberation, it affirms the Jewish spirit's unyielding capacity for hope and resilience. Recalling the Exodus, we see not only our ancestors' quest for freedom but also our own contemporary struggles and dreams for safety.

This is why I encourage you to embrace the seder's rituals and symbols, from the bitter herbs to the matzah, to the salt-water, that recall the taste and tears of history. The seder's symbols and rituals underscore Jewish resilience, too. This year, I will be particularly mindful of the significance of Elijah's cup and the hopeful declaration of "Next year in Jerusalem" at the Haggadah's conclusion. These elements symbolize both our collective aspiration for a world without strife and a longing for a future where peace prevails.

Why is this night different from all other nights? Because the Haggadah encourages us to ask: how do we attain such a vision?

The seder is an act of moral resistance. Passover urges us to

go beyond symbols and prayers by asking questions that help us to consider how we will work to resist oppression. The seder asks us to support those embroiled in conflict and injustice. It's a call towards Jewish solidarity and action, recognizing that the promise of tomorrow, the promise of freedom and redemption, is one that we make in partnership with God, step by step, supporting one another along the journey. This is precisely why Passover is a holiday meant to be celebrated in the company of family and friends — to invite people into our homes in an act of moral resistance that visions a better tomorrow. If you don't have plans to hold or attend a Passover seder yourself, please join us at Temple Beth El.

This Passover let the current

challenges not only weigh upon us but also fuel our inspiration. May the rituals and stories that have bolstered our ancestors lend us strength and hope to each of us. Celebrating Passover with one another, even amidst adversity, reaffirms our shared resolve to rise above the darkness, drawing from our rich heritage to forge a future where redemption is not just possible but imminent, led by the indomitable spirit of hope and resilience of Jewish unity.



Passover After October 7



By Rabbi Chanoch Oppenheim,
Charlotte Torah Center

This is the first Passover since October 7. Even if a miracle happens and by the time of publication, Hamas has been destroyed, Hezbollah has been neutralized, and people in Israel can go back to their homes and lives, we Jews are still dealing with PTSD. We live in a country that was a safe haven for our parents, grandparents, or great grandparents and we thought it was a safe place for us. Educational institutions we once revered are now hostile environments for our children and the heads of those institutions lack the moral clarity to publicly condemn rape, torture, and murder. Many people have noticed a palpable change in

their relationships with people at work and even with friends and colleagues of many years. Whether you're nine or ninety, in your lifetime you have never felt as self-conscious about being Jewish as we've felt in the last few months. The theme of Passover is freedom; can we honestly sit at the seder table this year and rejoice as free people when we have such an overwhelming existential threat looming over us? Yes! Absolutely!

This is one of the most exciting times to be a Jew. Since October 7, we've seen more *achdut* (unity) among Jews than any of us can remember. Decades of barriers — Ashkenazi, Sephardi, religious, non-religious, anti-religious, politically on the left, politically on the right — all seemed to vanish, much to the chagrin of our enemies. Israel had so much internal strife and there's nothing better than attacking a divided country. But Jews are different. We are one family, albeit a bit dysfunctional at times, and families unite and fight for one another.

Many Jews are asking for the first times in their lives what it means to be a Jew. They are

questioning, engaging, and open to conversations new to them. Why? They know that a peaceful group who for centuries have been known to be kind, fair, and loyal citizens are not only hated; it's a hatred not carried out on any other people. Our enemies aren't content to persecute or even enslave us, they want to murder us and it doesn't matter if we're communists or capitalists, they want us dead. We must possess something incredibly effective and powerful if they hate us for no good reason and it's causing Jews from all walks of life to reexamine what Judaism represents and, in some cases, they want to represent it and become leaders.

Britain's former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote a brilliant essay called "Why I am a Jew" in which he says,

"I am proud to be part of an age in which my people, ravaged by the worst crime ever to be committed against a people, responded by reviving a land, recovering their sovereignty rescuing threatened Jews throughout the world, rebuilding Jerusalem, and proving themselves to be as courageous in the pursuit of peace as in defending themselves

in war."

We too are proud to live at a time when tragedy has led to a triumph of love and concern for one another. When adversity has turned to advantage and how pain has led to unprecedented support to those suffering. And, most importantly, how, regardless of any differences, we all feel as one. This year at the Seder we will feel more connected to our Jewish brothers and sisters than ever before.

When our enemy Balaam tried to curse the Jewish people (Numbers 22), the Almighty intervened and Balaam ended up blessing them. Our enemies say, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." They don't realize they are actually uttering a beautiful statement of truth about an eternal people. This year, when bombs facing Israel are waiting to be launched, when Jews the world over are on high security alert, when many Jewish families in Israel have been displaced, this year, Jews from river to sea will sit at their Seder tables and know they are free. They know that just as we have survived until now against all odds, we will continue to survive. Just as the Shabbos and

Chanukah candles still burn in Jewish homes, so too they will burn there in the future. Just as the flimsy shack we call a Sukkah hasn't blown away or been destroyed by the Cossacks or Communists, our trusty Sukkah will stand in the future and so too with the rest of Jewish practices.

The Haggadah tells us that in every generation they have attempted to destroy us, but G-d has saved us from their hands. From Tolstoy to Twain, the world's great minds have been baffled by our existence. Although there's no logical explanation, we know we will still be here next year and always. We might be in pain, but we're strong, confident, and proud to be part of such an incredible and eternal nation. Jews know it, live it and breathe it — and this year at the seder we will make sure to talk about it. Keep that in mind and look forward to the best Seder ever. Am Yisrael Chai



Happy Passover

From the Bimah

Passover Is Not Passive



By Rabbi Rachel Smookler,
The Ruach Community

Thirty years ago, when I was a newlywed and a second-year rabbinical student living in New York City, my husband, Harrison, and I were invited to attend our first ever, “Black Tie Seder.” As midwestern Jews we had never heard of such thing, so we were intrigued, and a little nervous. We had no idea what to expect. We were excited to add this to our growing list of New York City experiences.

I suppose we understood the concept for this type of outlandish seder.

Our hosts chose black tie as a

symbol of the ultimate emancipation - freedom from slavery. In my family, the luxury of no longer being slaves was symbolized by hiring someone to help in the kitchen throughout the seder and clean-up afterwards, allowing everyone to focus on the seder. This was freedom!

The host family’s apartment was the most opulent Harrison and I had ever seen. I distinctly remember feeling out of place and uncomfortable. “Every family has their own meaningful rituals,” I reminded myself.

Knowing I was a rabbinic student, someone at the table asked which seder traditions were most important to me. I responded that growing up, our family had a tradition of going around the table and sharing something that was a personal burden or something we felt oppressed by. Even if something was too personal to share, we could silently acknowledge that there was something that had a hold on us. Passover is the time to get out from under our heavy burdens. Passover means cleaning the chametz out of our lives.

One teaching I always use at

my own seder builds upon an important verse in the Haggadah: “In every generation it is our duty to consider ourselves as if we have come forth from Egypt.” This means that we cannot just sit back and let Passover wash over us, blindly going through the rituals with no intention. Passover isn’t passive.

Whenever we came to this important verse in the Haggadah, “In every generation it is our duty to consider ourselves as if we have come forth from Egypt,” my mom would ask that each of us identify a burden, or an addiction that we would attempt to rid ourselves of during Passover. In my family, it wasn’t enough to solely give up leavened food. We were tasked with celebrating the holiday with every kosher l’pesach fiber of our being. I agree with the Haggadah and my mother.

Each of us must identify our own burdens. Have we become so immune to the unhealthy and toxic aspects of our lives or relationships that we don’t even recognize how they affect us?

I’m reminded of a Chasid-

ic teaching regarding the story of Passover. Rabbi Bunam, the Polish Chasidic teacher (1765-1827), once commented on Exodus 6:6 which says: I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. “A burden,” Rabbi Bunam said, “is usually carried with ease after one has become accustomed to it. Once God observed the Israelites growing accustomed to their tasks and labored at them without complaint, then He deemed it high time they were liberated.”

This teaching is like a flashing yellow light-slowing us down and forcing us to look at our lives and ask questions. Have we become so accustomed to the toxicity in our lives that we aren’t even trying to improve?

This Passover, don’t just clean the chametz out of your pantry and around your homes, make sure that you are ridding your life and your relationships of the harmful burdens that are no longer serving you. Add meaningful readings related to this topic to your family Haggadah. Encourage family and guests around

your seder table to think of burdens they carry and whether they may be able to take steps toward breaking the bonds of their personal oppression.

When we experience the Jewish calendar, and celebrate Jewish life, we begin to see that every six months or so, we are given the opportunity to transform our lives. Passover is not a passive holiday. While dressing up in Black Tie for the seder might make you feel as though you’re a free person, there are many other ways in which you can make your seder engaging and personalized.

May you have a kosher and meaningful Pesach. May you have the courage to leave your personal Egypt.



To Be Free We Must Embrace Who We Are



By Rabbi Michael Wolk,
Temple Israel

After hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt, it was finally time for our ancestors, the earliest Jewish people to go free. There was one night left to be spent in Egypt before they could march out of the country unstopped by Pharaoh and his brutal taskmasters. But there was one catch — the Jewish people would have to show God that they truly wanted to be free. Of course they didn’t want to be slaves anymore, but were they ready to stand on their own as free people? God puts them to the test. Several days in advance each Jewish family

was to select a lamb and on the evening before going free, they were to slaughter the lamb as a sacrifice to God and then gather with their families to eat a celebratory meal. Food has always been important for Jews even way back then, but there was one more absolutely critical step. Before nightfall each Jewish family had to paint the doorposts of their home with the blood of lamb. This sign would indicate to God which homes were Jewish homes as God came through the land and struck down the Egyptian first born.

Someone reading the familiar Passover story for the first time might ask if God really needs a sign to help identify the Jewish homes. If God is powerful enough to send ten plagues and to humble the most mighty human ruler in the world, why doesn’t God know where the Jewish people live? The answer, I believe, is that the blood really served to remind the people inside the home to say “I am Jewish.” After hundreds of years of persecution and attempted genocide, it might have been easier for the Jews of Egypt just to decide that they

wanted nothing more than to be regular Egyptians. They would drop the customs that made them unique and hope that within a few generations their grandchildren would be indistinguishable as the descendants of Jacob’s family who had migrated from Canaan to Egypt during a great famine.

So God challenges them at this moment. “If you want to be free,” God is saying, “you need to lean into the things that make you unique and you need to be willing to stand up and share them. Only once you have affirmed who you are can you aim to reach your potential.” It’s a powerful message and the Jews who are willing to mark their doors are the people who leave Egypt the next morning.

This is a story that happened a very long time ago, but it is also a story that takes place on a regular basis for American Jews in 2024. The Hebrew word for “doorpost” is “mezuzah” and today are supposed to mark our doorposts not with blood, but rather with the words of the Shema that both remind us of who we are when we enter our homes and shares that

identity with anyone who sees our doors. Likewise, Egypt was a physical place, but it is also a spiritual place. The Hebrew word for “Egypt” is “mitzrayim” and literally means “the constricted place.” In every generation Jews have been enslaved in different constricted places where we have felt the pressure to give up our identities and the things that make us unique.

This year we are all constricted because of the terrorist attacks of October 7 and because of the antisemitism that has become all too common in response to Israel’s war against Hamas. Like many of the Jews in Egypt, there are many Jews today who wonder if it is safe to mark the mezuzot of their homes and proclaim their Jewish identity. It is easy to feel fear, but Jews have never survived difficult situations by hiding. Rather we learn from Passover that to be free, we must embrace who we are and tell everyone else that we are here. As a rabbi in the south, I’ve found that this means speaking to many school and church groups who are curious, but know little about their

Jewish neighbors even though we live side by side. More powerful that one time talks with a rabbi however, is the one on one contact that each of us has with our neighbors. To be free in our world means not only to proudly display mezuzot on our doors where our neighbors can see them, but also to share with our friends how personal the attacks on Israel are to us and how the acts of antisemitism committed here in the United States affect our lives and return us to that constricted place.

Passover should be a fun and enjoyable holiday filled with good food, family, and friends, but it’s also the time when we ask ourselves if we are doing what we need to do to experience the freedom that God gave our ancestors in Egypt.

Chag Sameach!



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Religious Life

Jewish Values in Action: Temple Beth El Teens Advocate in D.C.

By Rabbi Beth Nichols

“As Jews, it is our duty to ensure the wellbeing of all people.”

“Jewish texts and traditions teach us to, first and foremost, be good caretakers of the earth.”

“As Jewish people, we hold community and caring for it as a priority and necessity.”

These powerful words were spoken by Temple Beth El high school students in the halls of Congress. In February, 11 members of the Temple Beth El Confirmation Class traveled to Washington, D.C., on the David Silverman Memorial Confirmation Trip, accompanied by Rabbi Beth Nichols and Jessica Auslander. Our group joined hundreds of other Jewish teenagers for the Bernard and Audre Rapoport L'Taken Social Justice Seminars run by the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC).

Following lively Shabbat services and dinner, the teens got to work learning about how they can effect change in our society. The RAC's program introduced participants to a variety of public policy issues and explored related Jewish values. Throughout the weekend, teens participated in simulations and seminars, assembling valuable advocacy tools to help them share their voices. Of course, being in Washington, D.C., we visited the National Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Smithsonian, and Georgetown, and celebrated Havdalah at the base of the Jefferson Memorial.

On Sunday night, while much of the country was watching the Super Bowl, the Temple Beth El teens divided into groups to write speeches on the public policy issues that concerned them most: access to mental health resources in schools, gun violence prevention, and climate change. The teens wrote powerful and persuasive speeches that included researched facts, quoted Jewish texts, and shared personal experiences.

On Monday morning, our group got off the bus in front of the Capitol building dressed in business attire and eager to present their speeches. Over the course of the day, the group visited the offices of Senator Thom Tillis, Senator Ted Budd, Representative Jeff Jackson, and Representative Dan Bishop. At each office, they presented their speeches to congressional staff members, ending with specific legislative asks of their elected officials.

As a rabbi, my job on Capitol Hill that day was to step back and let our teens shine. Over the course of the weekend, the



Students of the 2024 Temple Beth El Confirmation Class stand in front of the Capitol in Washington, D.C.

L'Taken Seminar prepared them to passionately express their beliefs, represent our community's values, and engage in the work of repairing our world. I have no doubt that this trip will not be the last time that our teens' voices will be heard in the halls of government.

In commemorating the legacy of David Silverman, Temple Beth El has named our annual confirmation trip in memory of this remarkable individual whose young life was a beacon of community and compassion. David, the cherished son of Marc and Mattye Silverman, was a vibrant soul who, despite his youth, left an indelible mark on those around him through his actions and ideals when he died of a brain tumor in 1995. The naming of the David Silverman Memorial Confirmation Trip pays homage to David's spirit and

aspirations, reflecting his innate ability to bring people together and a belief in the power of youth to drive change and embody the core Jewish values of kindness and tikkun olam.

Through this trip, David's memory will continue to inspire future generations within our congregation, bringing Jewish teens together and encouraging them to live purposefully to contribute positively to our community and beyond. Temple Beth El is deeply grateful to Marc and Mattye Silverman and The Marc and Mattye Silverman Family Foundation for their generosity in making this possible.



SPICE Organizes Passover Food Drive for Jewish Family Services

By Robert Weiss

An essential part of SPICE's (Senior Programs of Interest, Concern, and Engagement) annual activities is to contribute to organizations that are essential to the well-being of our community. Over the years, SPICE has worked closely with Sterling Elementary School and Jewish Family Services to meet the needs of those who are facing hardship and need assistance.

SPICE sponsors two food drives annually for JFS — at Chanukah and Passover — to provide food for families so they can better celebrate these holidays with traditional and nutritional meals.

This year's Passover food drive is scheduled for Wednesday, April 3. SPICE members and Temple Beth El staff will greet participants at the temple's main entrance from 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m., ready to collect non-perishable food donations (please, no expired food, or items containing pork, or shellfish) and supermarket gift cards (with a preference for Aldi or Walmart). To participate, please refer to the Jewish Family Services' website for a list of needed food items at jfscharlotte.org.

Thank you to all who have contributed in the past and we look forward to thanking those who support SPICE and Jewish Family Services this April. Together, we can make a significant impact in the lives of those celebrating Passover in our community.

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Religious Life

Temple Solel and Temple Kol Ami Kids Together

By Laurabree Monday

Recently, the two Fort Mill-based congregations, Temple Solel and Temple Kol Ami, hosted a joint youth group event. This gathering aimed to introduce our young people to the broader Jewish community in South Carolina. Despite the small size of each temple, both are brimming with individuals passionate about ensuring our children recognize and cherish

their heritage. Building camaraderie can significantly contribute to this goal, prompting organizers from both synagogues to bring together about a dozen kids at Stars and Strikes in Rock Hill for an afternoon of bowling and entertainment. As I mingled with the mothers, many of whom were either reflecting on recent b'nei mitzvahs or in the midst of planning them, I realized how much we

share in terms of the pride we hold and the aspirations we harbor for our children. It struck me as particularly beautiful that our Jewish tradition celebrates these young individuals at a pivotal moment—poised between youth and adulthood. It's a time when affirming their sense of belonging and love is most crucial. Below are excerpts from love letters and snippets of b'nei mitzvah speeches, penned by a few proud Jewish mothers from South Carolina.

Tanya Trachtenberg to her son Cooper (Temple Solel): As you become a bar mitzvah, this is an important milestone in your Jewish heritage. Past, present and future. Follow your heart, fight for what's right, and be healthy and happy. We could not be more proud of you. Mazel tov!

Stacy Constant to her daughter Miriam (Temple Kol Ami): In the Torah, kindness or chesed is mentioned more than 200 times. Being kind is such an important part of Judaism. Kindness has always been one of your strengths. As you grow, I am in awe of your courage. Recently, you went to the nursing home with the student council, and when I picked you up, you excitedly told me that you wanted to go back and visit again. Visiting the nursing home was such a wonderful mitzvah of kindness. Mitzvahs do not need to be big, but every day, you can strive to do mitzvot.

Sara Blanke to her daughter Olivia (Temple Solel): As our daughter stands before us, ready to embrace her role in the Jewish community, we are filled with profound pride and gratitude. A bat mitzvah is not just about reciting prayers or reading from



Temple Solel and Temple Kol Ami kids together

the Torah; it's about embodying the values of compassion, justice, and kindness. It's about embracing her role in tikkun olam, repairing the world, and making a positive difference in the lives of others. Her preparation for this day has been filled with determination, hard work, and perseverance. We're so proud of her, not just for today, but for the kindness and caring she brings to everything she does. From her involvement in synagogue activities to her volunteer work, she exemplifies the values of compassion and service that are at the heart of our faith.

Erin Roseman to her daughter Maddie (Temple Kol Ami): I am so excited to get to celebrate this milestone with you. I feel like it was just yesterday that we found out we were pregnant. You are always thinking of others and are such a caring individual. You are an amazing friend, always worried about supporting your

friends in theater, or seeing them play sports. A fantastic sister, you look up to your sibling and love supporting them in theater and life. A marvelous daughter, who is always willing to help me out and is so much fun to be around. I love that you put 100% into everything you do. You have put such hard work into preparing for this day and I am so impressed with how you have handled all the pressure.

Laurabree Monday to her son Ethan Monday (Temple Solel): Your generous heart, kindness, and loving spirit are contagious. We feel it at home. Friends and classmates sense it. Teachers feel it in school. Teammates feel it on the pitch. Your Temple family lights up at services when they see you. Everyone who knows you, is better for having you in their lives. We are so proud of the man you're becoming and the work you've put into this big day!

Mazel tov to all the upcoming b'nei mitzvah in the greater Charlotte area - we are proud of you!

If you'd like to visit Temple Solel, we welcome members and guests with open arms, valuing presence, enthusiasm, talents, and involvement over annual dues. We meet at 7 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Friday of every month at Grace Presbyterian Church, 2955 W. Highway 160 in Fort Mill. For more about our services and events, visit templesolelsc.org or call (803) 6101707. We'd love to meet you.

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Ambulance Dedication
SUNDAY, APRIL 7 AT 10 A.M.

Thanks to your generous contributions to American Friends of Magen David Adom, Temple Israel will be donating an ambulance to Israeli first responders. It will be making a stop at Temple Israel as it makes its journey to Israel. Join us as we dedicate the ambulance and celebrate Israel.

This family-friendly event will feature food, a card-making station for Israeli first responders, guest speakers, music, and bounce houses for the kids.

Food is just \$12, including a drink and will be available for purchase, or you can pre-pay by visiting the upcoming programs page at templeisraelnc.org or by scanning the QR code below.



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2nd Night
Congregational Seder

AN EXPERIENCE LED BY RABBI MICHAEL WOLK & CANTOR SHIRA LISSEK
Tuesday, April 23, 6 p.m.

Please join us this Passover for our annual 2nd Night Temple Israel Congregational Seder. It will be musical, engaging, and fun for the entire family! Dinner will be provided by Melanie Rowe Catering.

MENU
Baked Gefilte Fish
Matzah Ball Soup
Roasted Chicken with Spring Vegetables
Fresh Thyme, Lemon, Fingerling Potatoes, Carrots, Olive Oil
Dessert

Cost: \$54/adult; \$65/adult guest; \$20/child (3-12 years old); free/age 2 and under. To register (by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, April 16), please visit the upcoming programs page at templeisraelnc.org.

SEE ALL OF OUR UPCOMING PROGRAMS AT [TEMPLEISRAEL.ORG](https://templeisraelnc.org)



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Religious Life

Temple Kol Ami Presents “Rescued: The Story of a Child Holocaust Survivor”

By Bonnie Shaw

Temple Kol Ami, in collaboration with Winthrop University's Department of Political Science, Philosophy, Religion and Legal Studies; the Peace, Justice, and Conflict Resolution Studies program; and the International and Global Studies program, is honored to present “Rescued: The Story of a Child Holocaust Survivor.” The event will feature Holocaust survivor Suly Chenkin, who will share her remarkable story of survival, a testament to her parents' immense sacrifice during a time of unimaginable atrocity. At the age of 83, Chenkin's reflections on resilience, compassion, and the



Suly Chenkin

destructive nature of hate, “Anger, hate only destroys you,” resonate deeply with all who hear her story.

The presentation will be introduced by Alan Resnik, Chenkin's cousin and a member of Temple Kol Ami, underscoring the personal connection and significance of her story to the community. This event is scheduled for Sunday, April 14, 2024, at 3 p.m. at Dinah's Place in The DiGiorgio Campus Center at Winthrop University, located at 2020 Alumni Dr., Rock Hill, SC 29732. Attendees are invited to join and witness firsthand the

powerful narrative of survival and hope that Chenkin brings to life.

Temple Kol Ami is experiencing a period of significant growth and is currently seeking a part-time temple administrator to help manage this expansion. Ideal candidates should have a passion for Judaism, exceptional organizational skills, and strong project management abilities.

The position offers a flexible schedule, including weekend availability. If you're interested in learning more about this opportunity, please don't hesitate to contact us at yorksynagogue@gmail.com.

Located in York County and the Ballantyne area, Temple Kol Ami is a warm, inclusive Reform congregation welcoming Jews from diverse backgrounds. We

invite you to visit and discover your Jewish home within our community.

Temple Kol Ami is hiring for a Temple administrator. For full job details, visit www.templekol-ami.org.



A young Suly Chenkin

Havurat Tikvah to Host Saturday Morning Shabbat Services

Havurat Tikvah will hold a Community Shabbat Service on April 13, 10 a.m., at Avondale Presbyterian Church, 2821 Park Rd., Charlotte in a newly-marked classroom (see signs on the door). Following services, a social will be held along with kiddush, challah, and blessings.

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

vurat 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/.



Join Temple Kol Ami

As we retell the story of Passover during our annual second night seder. L'dor V'dor.

When: Tuesday, April 23, 2024, at 6:30 pm

Hosted at: The Mirror Room

855 Gold Hill Road Fort Mill SC 29708

Catered by: The Roasting Oven

Non-member Price: \$55 per adult | \$35 per child

payments must be received online by April 19th at templekolamisc.org or use the QR code



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Religious Life

Inauguration Ceremony for New Jewish Center Marks Five Years of Growth for Chabad of Lake Norman

On Sunday Feb. 25, Chabad of Lake Norman held a grand opening for its new community center on Bethel Church Road in Cornelius NC. Dozens attended the inauguration ceremony, including the center's founders, donors, regional rabbinical leaders, community members and many others.

"Chabad of Lake Norman is more than just a synagogue, it's a lighthouse that reaches out to Jews wherever they are, no matter their background or religious affiliation," said Rabbi Chaim Greenberg, who co-directs the center with his wife Chaya, in his opening speech at the event. "It's a place for the community to come together and unite, a space to connect to each other and to G-d, and a venue where we can celebrate joyous events and programs for all ages."

Since opening in 2018, Chabad of Lake Norman has served the towns of Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson, Mooresville, Troutman, Statesville and Denver. In addition to hosting Shabbat and holiday services,

it offers programs such as Hebrew School and summer camp for kids ages 4-12, visits to local senior citizens, and adult educational classes. With the new space, the Greenbergs are looking forward to expanding their Jewish lifecycle events such as Bar and Bat Mitzvah training and celebrations, wedding officiation as well as facilitating Jewish burial arrangements.

The inauguration event was highlighted by the keynote address delivered by Rabbi Yossi Groner, the longest-serving rabbi in the Carolinas. Among the distinguished speakers were Budd & Leslie Berro, respected community leaders and Rhoda Miller, who spoke about the importance of Chabad's role in Lake Norman Jewish life.

"Since Oct. 7, Jews around the country have responded to rising antisemitism and the conflict in Israel by doubling down on their faith and their heritage," says Rabbi Greenberg. "At this fraught time, Jews are standing tall and proud, and the opening of our new center is a sign that



Chabad of Lake Norman co-directors, Rabbi Chaim and Chaya Greenberg (left), are seen with community leaders Budd & Leslie Berro at the Chabad Center's inauguration ceremony on February 25, 2024

we aren't giving into fear." Since 2020, the Lake Norman community has seen a large influx of new Jewish residents. The center will be a hub for rapidly growing Jewish life in the area, and features a multipurpose hall which serves as the synagogue sanctuary and social hall, as well as a youth room for educational classes and recreational activities. Chabad has also purchased

a new parcel of land across the street from the current center and has plans to expand the center in a later phase of development.

About Chabad of Lake Norman

Chabad of Lake Norman was founded in 2018 to serve the local Jewish community. They are dedicated to building on the philosophy and mission of Chabad-Lubavitch by providing Jewish

communities the education and resources they need in order to celebrate their culture and engage in Jewish practice in an easy and accessible way.

After the Holocaust, the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, transformed Chabad into a worldwide movement, dedicated to caring for the spiritual and material needs of all Jews, wherever they could be found.

Today, over 3,500 Chabad institutions are located in more than 85 countries, with a new center opening on the average every ten days. In South Africa, South America, Russia, Australia, Asia, the U.K., and many parts of the U.S.A., Chabad has become the most dynamic and dominant force within the Jewish community.



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Community Unites at Charlotte Stands With Israel Concert

By Lena Kosinovsky

Last fall, mere weeks after the horror of October 7, my husband and I went to a long since planned event with close friends. More than half of those in attendance had lived in Israel for many years. Everyone had close relatives and friends in the IDF, under the barrage of rockets, reeling from losses. We went with mixed feelings best described as “It’s good that it wasn’t canceled. Hamas can’t erase our lives completely.”

What we experienced was even better than that. Three of our friends, an accomplished vocalist, violinist, and pianist, started the event with magnificent renditions of Hatikvah and Shema Israel. It was beautiful, touching, and uplifting. I immediately thought that their talent could be used to uplift a larger community.

The trio (with the violinist’s son, a talented multi-instrument musician) decided to continue working together. Thus, The Mosaic Project was born. We decided to share their talent with others and organized a Chanukah event for the wider ex-Soviet Jewish community of Charlotte. That program was a hit, with over 70 attendees. We

raised more than \$1,500 for Magen David Adom, Israel’s national emergency medical, disaster, ambulance, and blood bank service.

The success of that event gave me the idea to bring it to a wider audience and bring multiple organizations together in support of Israel. I spoke to several well-respected local professional music groups, who, along with The Mosaic Project, generously and gladly donated their time and talent. We set a Feb. 10 date and secured a venue for 200 people and began planning for the Charlotte Stands With Israel Concert.

To help me organize the event, I turned to Club Z teens and parents. I initially helped bring Club Z to Charlotte four-and-a-half years ago and led it for the first year (until we were able to hire a regional director). This organization helps high school kids become strong, knowledgeable, and proud Jewish leaders. In dozens of campuses around the country, the top leaders of pro-Israel student organizations are Club Z graduates. At both UNC Chapel Hill and UNC Charlotte — they are graduates of Club Z Charlotte.

It was natural therefore for

me to rely on them to organize a large fundraiser. The venue was sponsored by Club Z Charlotte. My co-director of Club Z Charlotte, Rabbi Ya’aqov Walker, made a powerful and eloquent address to the audience. The keynote address was delivered by Olga Washington, a South African native and Charlotte resident. She is the past director of Club Z Charlotte and (until last month) national COO of Club Z. Among numerous awards and accolades for her pro-Israel work, last fall Olga was recognized by Jerusalem Post as #1 among the 25 leading Zionist “ViZionaries” worldwide. She is currently spearheading the African-Jewish Alliance (AJA), a coalition of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish groups that educates the public about the religiously-inspired mass murder, kidnapping, and enslavement of blacks, Jews, and Muslims by jihadists across North Africa and in the Middle East. The AJA also campaigns for the captives’ liberation.

In addition to The Mosaic Project (Katy Sherman, Marina Goman, Inna Amronin, and Tal Goman), the following musicians performed:

- The String Duo, an award-winning duet of Maria

Alexandra and Angelina Reed

- The dynamic instrumental/vocal ensemble of JoDavi (Joshua David Washington), which tours throughout the country and internationally. Joshua is also the President of Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel.

- Talented pianist and composer Randy Sandoli. Both Randy and Joshua are Christian Zionists, our indispensable friends at this time, and always.

- We also heard riveting vocal and instrumental performances by Sam and Mick Cohen. I had the privilege of watching these outstanding young brothers grow up in our congregation.

Rabbi Rachel Smookler of The Ruach delivered inspiring and uplifting insights about her recent mission trip to Israel and led us in prayer for Israel and the hostages.

This event would also not have been possible without the Israeli volunteers who decorated the hall with Israeli and American flags and hostage posters, as well as spread the word, which brought us to full capacity. It also would not have been possible without The Amber Room, volunteers who handled sound, as well as Woland Web, which volunteered the marketing efforts.

The concert turnout exceeded all expectations. Two hundred eight people gathered, and we sang and clapped along, danced, cried, and laughed. We represented different races, religions, genders, and ages. The concert ran considerably longer than we planned due to calls for encore and long ovations.

Before and after the concert, we held a benefit sale of art works donated by local award-winning artists: Vladimir Vitkovsky, the estate of Abram Rabkin, as well as several Israeli artists, whose works we imported from Israel. Altogether, the Charlotte Stands with Israel Concert and the Art sale netted more than \$7,500 for Israeli charities.

We are grateful to everyone who came for this unforgettable evening of Jewish Unity at the time when it’s needed the most. Am Israel Chai!





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We are glad to do this and feel rewarded by it, but if the demands are heavy, over time we can also become exhausted and stressed.

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Join Jewish Family Services in welcoming guest speaker Fern Pessin
Thurs, April 11th at 3-4:30pm via Zoom
Topic: When Can We Talk?

Don't wait for a conflict or big decision to practice communication skills with family. Hear from our caregiving and communication expert, Fern Pessin, author of "I'll Be Right There" and "When Can We Talk," as she discusses:

- how to start and navigate difficult conversations
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- what it takes to get the whole family involved
- how to develop your care network
- what's needed to keep moving forward together

To register, scan qr code or visit:
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The Greenspon Center: Empowering Educators and Activists



By Mary Eshet

Just as spring brings new growth all around us, the Stan Greenspon Holocaust and Social Justice Education Center is excited for the fruit our programs are bearing in April. The Center's two certification programs will graduate new cohorts, and the "Seeing Auschwitz" exhibit will complete its Charlotte tour on April 15.

Certificate in Holocaust Pedagogy

The Certificate in Holocaust Pedagogy (CHP) is having a tremendous impact on students across the state. Last year, graduates were able to apply their learning in ways that impacted Holocaust instruction for more than 170,000 students, and they will continue to do so each year.

"The cohort graduating this April will have even farther reach, with educators working in school districts different from the first cohort and individuals overseeing the creation and implementation of the new Holocaust elective at the state level," said Katie Cunningham, Holocaust curriculum and outreach specialist at the Greenspon Center. "Graduates will expand their impact through their final projects, which include deliver-

ing professional development at their schools, within their districts, or at the state level."

The two cohorts will travel together to Poland, meeting in Warsaw on June 21 and continuing to Krakow. The trip will be grounded in sound pedagogy and reflection, allowing participants to walk away with individual and collective meaning they can apply to their work with students and other educators. Due to grants and donations, most expenses for the experience will be covered for educators, including a partial airfare stipend.

Direct quotes from participants in the program reflect the meaningfulness and value of their experience:

"I am walking away with so much more than I expected. I don't think I realized my knowledge gaps or misunderstandings of history until this course."

"I learned the importance of approaching this topic with sensitivity, empathy, and a deliberate consideration for teaching trauma and the emotional impact the content of the Holocaust may have on the learner."

Social Justice and Community Organizing

The Greenspon Center's Social Justice and Community Or-

ganizing (SJCO) Certification program trains participants with political education and practical skills to effectively organize for social change. In April, the second cohort of this program will graduate.

Judith Brown, executive director of Project 70Forward, a nonprofit committed to the advancement of people with disabilities, was among the first cohort of 15 participants, graduating in Spring 2023.

"My main goal in attending the Social Justice and Community Organizing class was to get over my hesitation around activism and organizing to fight injustices. Even as an executive director of a grassroots nonprofit, I felt inadequate when it came to getting people organized around a cause," said Brown. "Before the class ended, not only did I know I was a good fit, but I used my class praxis project to start a new program, which would eventually spin out to form a state-wide initiative and coalition."

With support from classmates and SJCO staff, she joined three coalitions that had a focus on voter protection and education, galvanizing support for voters with disabilities. From those

small steps, REV UP NC, a state-wide coalition, has been formed — the first of its kind in North Carolina.

"Without the work, support, mentorship, and focus of the SJCO class, I would not have been a part of this great civic development in our state," said Brown.

"Seeing Auschwitz"

The "Seeing Auschwitz" exhibit will host its last visitors in Charlotte on April 15.

"It is hard to believe this exhibit is coming to a close," said Judy LaPietra, associate director of the Greenspon Center. "The response from the community has been tremendous, and visitors consistently shared how impactful the experience was for them. With antisemitism and Holocaust denial continuing to rise, even right here in our community, this exhibit was a powerful reminder that we cannot look away and remain indifferent in the face of discrimination and violence."

Thanks to the generosity of donors, the exhibit was free for students, and thousands of regional students toured the exhibit since its opening on Feb. 9.

Educators expressed their appreciation for the opportunity:

"The exhibit was not only

educational but also deeply impactful. The inclusion of photographs allowed students to visualize and conceptualize the gravity of what took place, making the learning experience even more profound."

"I particularly appreciated how the exhibits were curated to juxtapose the lackadaisical attitudes of the Nazi guards with the evils they were perpetrating; it really brought home to students the importance of awareness of humanitarian issues."

One student wrote in a reflection about the exhibit:

"The whole image, so largely in front of me, well, I suddenly found it overtook so many of my emotions. The detail in which the Nazis had everything planned out, the systematic procedure of where everyone went, and how officers willingly were aware of and facilitated the mass killings, brought out much emotion in me. On the wall there was almost a poem from a survivor saying that she will continue to remember what happened for the rest of her life, pleading the world to never forget what happened. I don't think I ever will."

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Women's News

Hadassah Women Learn About Local Government

By Aileen Greenberg-Kriner

Hadassah women are influencers and advocates. We take a strong stand on issues concerning Israel, women, healthcare, and other important topics. We get involved with government at all levels to educate and influence decisions that impact our priorities. Hadassah president, Carol Ann Gershuny Schwartz, regularly meets with Heads of State, members of Congress, and presidents of major American Jewish organizations. But before we at the local level can influence our state, city, and county lawmakers, we need to understand the workings of our government and who to contact to make a request or share an opinion. That's what Know Before You Go (Vote) was all about.

On Sunday, Feb. 25, Hadassah Charlotte Metro sponsored Know Before You Go, a non-partisan government and voting education program to help people navigate the local political landscape. As we entered, those who pre-registered were provided with a personalized information



L to R: Michael Dickerson, Hadassah's Gina Robins, Marci Goldberg, and Patricia Johnson; Leigh Altman, Douglas Greene. Not pictured: Tariq Bokhari, Lisa Cline.

sheet with our voting details (county, voter registration number, party, etc.) and jurisdictions (voting precincts, districts), and a sample ballot for the March election.

Tariq Bokhari, Charlotte City Council District 6 representa-

tive, explained what the city is responsible for and what is handled by the county. He talked about the various committee meetings, the type of matters discussed at each, and how to contact our elected representatives. He also discussed Council priori-

ties: public safety, homelessness, zoning, and infrastructure.

Lisa Cline, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Board of Education District 5 representative, spoke about how the Board of Education works, how programs are funded, how to contact School Board members, and Board priorities such as the teacher shortage. She also described a new mental health program at Myers Park High School that was funded by a family after their child committed suicide.

Michael Dickerson, director of Mecklenburg County Board of Elections, talked about voter registration and voter ID requirements, which recently changed. He explained how to find your precinct, talked about early voting, and shared historical statistics about voter registration and the influence of independent voters on primary elections.

Mecklenburg County Commissioner-At-Large Leigh Altman is, among other roles, the Jewish liaison between the County and the Jewish community. She works to educate

public officials about Israel and antisemitism, and to gain their support. Commissioner Altman spoke about the role of the county commissioners, taxes, how County funds are disbursed, and policies concerning mass transit, education, parks, and economic development.

Douglas Greene, government relations and public affairs associate for the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, spoke about the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), the advocacy and public affairs arm of the Federation. The JCRC is the "point person" when there is an antisemitic incident at your child's school or in the community. The JCRC advocates for Charlotte's Jewish community by educating, engaging, and creating connections with elected officials and diverse ethnic, racial, and religious interest groups in the greater Charlotte area.

Events like Know Before You Go help empower Hadassah members to be active participants in the democratic process and leaders in our community.

(Continued on page 25)

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Around the Table at Passover



By Charlotte Rouchouze

This past month, I spent a couple of weeks in France visiting my husband's family who lives outside of Saint-Étienne in central France. Whenever we go to France, we always reserve at least one day to go to Lyon, a beautiful city less than an hour from Saint-Étienne, where we had the good fortune to live for a year before having kids. Spending time in Lyon has given me a window into the Jewish community of France which has undergone big changes in the last 50 years. For those who don't know, France is home to the third largest Jewish community in the world, after Israel and the United States. Before the 1960s, France's Jewish commu-

nity was a creaky Ashkenazi one that was heading toward disappearance via assimilation. A series of deep-seated societal changes in the French-influenced North African countries led to a massive dispersal of nearly all the Jews of North Africa, with many resettling in France. This community of highly traditional Tunisian, Moroccan, and Algerian Jews has breathed new life into French Jewry, and this can be seen in Lyon which, for a population of some 30,000 Jews, boasts at least five or six bustling Jewish markets. I visited one of them on a Friday and saw folks grabbing steaming hot challot, selecting kosher meats, and picking up Shabbat candles. We even saw an impromptu round of simcha dancing in the check-out line, perhaps celebrating a birth or wedding. I'm not sure!

In honor of my trip to France, I will offer you two recipes. The first is a for something called huevos haminados, or beid hamin, an ancient Sephardic way of preparing eggs that works beautifully on the Passover seder table. Versions of these slow cooked eggs are traditional across the Sephardic world (historically North Africa, the



Old city of Lyon, France

Middle East and Greece), and were most likely derived from the eggs that were nestled into the embers of the hearth left to burn out over the Sabbath. Over time, people shifted to cooking in their private homes and this led to the tradition of putting the eggs directly into the stew pot

(called the hamin). Finally, in an effort to make the eggs parve so they could be consumed with either dairy or meat meals, they were, over time, moved out of the meat pot and boiled or baked on their own. The roasted flavor and mottled design makes them perfect for the seder plate. If you

are looking to cut corners and are not concerned about the toasty flavor, the same technique can be used to create a beautiful pattern on the eggs in much less time.

The second recipe is a chocolate mousse that is one of our all-time favorite recipes, and one that happens to be kosher for Passover. You will never disappoint your guests with this one. We like to try to find pasteurized eggs for extra safety, although they do not incorporate air as easily, so it will slightly affect the texture.

(Recipes on page 25)

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.thechildrentable.com. Contact her at charlotte.rouchouze@yahoo.com.



PASSOVER TOOLBOX

Looking for ways to involve your child in your family's Seder? We have a toolbox of hands-on activities so that your child may not only help prepare for Passover but also keep busy during your Passover Seder, making the experience more fun and meaningful.

Each toolbox includes:

- A Children's Haggadah
- Puppets
- Puzzle
- Crafts including a matzah cover & Seder plate craft
- Passover bingo game
- Matzah catcher
- Stickers & more

Passover Toolboxes may be borrowed from the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library at the Center for Jewish Education at Shalom Park.

Quantities are very limited, so reserve your toolbox soon by emailing library@jewishcharlotte.org or calling 704-944-6783.



Around the Table at Passover

Huevos Haminados

Equipment: Lidded pot or slow cooker
Serves 12

- 1 dozen eggs (or however many needed)
- onion skins peeled from 3 or 4 brown onions
- 1 tbsp ground coffee
- 1 tbsp oil

In a pot large enough to accommodate the eggs, or a slow cooker, lay down a bed of onion peels. Next lay the eggs. Cover with water, coffee, and oil and cover. Simmer the eggs on low for 8-12 hours. For a lacy effect, tap the eggs lightly with a spoon to crack them about halfway through cooking. Note: If you are only interested in the appearance, this same technique of boiling eggs in coffee-tinted water can be used to make beautiful seder eggs in much less time, but they will lack the authentic, roasted flavor of huevos haminados.



Authentic French Mousse au Chocolat

Equipment: 2 mixing bowls, saucepan, rubber spatula, and ramekins or bowl for serving
Serves 8

- 300 g dark chocolate (about 10 oz), broken into pieces
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 tbsp butter
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 3 tbsp cognac (optional)
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 4 egg whites
- 2 cups heavy cream

Place the chocolate in a heatproof bowl and set over a pot of simmering water. Stir until the chocolate is melted, then add the butter, cognac (something like rum can be substituted), and vanilla. Remove from the heat and cool for several minutes. Next, add the beaten eggs to the chocolate. In a separate mixing bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff, slowly adding the sugar. Slowly fold the chocolate mixture into the egg whites. In a second mixing bowl, whip the cream. Gently fold the cream into the chocolate using a rubber spatula and distribute it into ramekins or one large bowl if preferred. Chill before serving.

Hadassah

(Continued from page 23)

April Highlights

We're hosting our annual *Passover Tasting Lunch & Recipe Swap* on Sunday, April 14, from noon-2 p.m. Bring a home-made dairy or pareve/vegetarian Passover appetizer, main course, or dessert to share. Email your recipe to Roz at rcooper133@aol.com by April 7. All recipes will be available electronically after the event. This is a great program for new or prospective members. Check our website for sign-up details and location.

Members and non-members are welcome to meet and mingle at Hadassah's Coffee Klatch on Wednesday, April 17. Join us at 10 a.m. at Brakeman's Coffee in downtown Matthews, 225 N. Trade Street.

Other Spring Events

Hadassah Wine & Schmooze on April 2 at 7 p.m. at Vintner Wine Market in the Arboretum Shopping Center.

Short Story Discussion Group meets on the second Friday of the month, and continues to read stories throughout 2024 from the collection "Frankly Feminist: Short Stories by Jewish Women." The next meeting is

11:45 a.m. on Friday, April 12 to discuss "My Daughter's Boyfriends" by Penny Jackson.

Hadassah BookTalk will not meet in April because of Passover. Join us on May 28 to discuss "Don't Forget to Write" by Sara Goodman Confino.

The next Hadassah *CLT Metro Board meeting* is Monday, April 15 at 7 p.m.

Helpful Info

To learn about membership, contact Laurie Sheinhaus at the phone number or email below, or come to one of our events.

Our website, www.hadassah-cltvents.org, has details and registration links for our events. If you have questions or need additional information, email HadassahCLT@gmail.com or call our general phone number, (980) 553-1880. Follow us on Facebook (Hadassah CLT Metro) and Instagram (Hadassah Charlotte Metro).

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Bal Tashchit and Beyond: Adventures Growing and Sharing Microgreens



By Liz Wahls

Increasing our nutritional intake in ways that are easy, affordable, and tasty is a common goal. Microgreens, while fitting these criteria, can often be expensive, often costing more than \$35 per pound. However, many in our community have discovered that microgreens can be easily grown at home, offering a way to both boost nutrition and give back.

Shalom Green launched the Pe’Ah Forward Microgreen Growing program last June. Participants

were given seeds and committed to donating at least half of their microgreens to the Jewish Family Services’ food pantry every other week while keeping the remainder for their own enjoyment. Our garden coordinator, Bobbie Mabe, taught interested community members how to easily grow microgreens inside with just seeds, paper towels, and water.

What exactly are microgreens? Microgreens are plants that are harvested after their first set of

leaves have developed and are similar to sprouts. They contain up to nine times more nutrients and health-promoting micronutrients than fully-grown vegetables! Because they are rich in nutrients, smaller amounts may provide similar nutritional benefits compared to larger quantities of mature vegetables. There are many tasty microgreens that can be grown at home including arugula, sunflower, radish, pea, and alfalfa. The more colorful the crop, the more nutrients it



Community members learning how to grow microgreens

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contains!

There are so many ways to incorporate microgreens into your diet. Put them on top of salads, soups, and sandwiches. Or use them in smoothies, blended into dips and sauces, and added to omelets. This website has some simple recipes: www.yummyaddiction.com/microgreen-recipes.

If you are interested in learning to grow microgreens and in giving back to the community, come to our free microgreens program on Sunday, May 26, from 10-11 a.m. Learn more and register at our website: www.shalomgreenclt.org.

“I always feel positive when I do something for another person,” said Bobbie Phillips, one of the growers, “so I love the idea of sharing what I grow.” The two-week growing cycle gave her continuous pleasure, seeing the seeds sprout and then grow a bit each day. Occasionally, she had a “crop failure,” but that didn’t stop her since she knew it was so easy to start a new one. Bobbie has always loved plants and was delighted to find an easy way to grow food inside without the time and commitment needed for an outside garden.

Another participant, Ruth Pordes, said, “Growing and giving microgreens as part of Shalom Green’s Pe’Ah Forward paid back to me in good health and learning!” Ruth and her husband enjoy using microgreens in place of lettuce in their salads and sandwiches.

At the request of a Levine JCC Oasis participant, Shalom Green provided Oasis with a program in 2023 on the intense nutritional value of microgreens and how to easily grow them at home. Oasis participants really enjoyed eating alfalfa and clover microgreens on top of bagels with cream cheese!

We are proud to report that between June and October of 2023, Pe’Ah Forward microgreen growers contributed an average of 10 individual servings of alfalfa microgreens per week to the JFS Food Pantry. Pantry clients were able to sample the microgreens and were provided with information about their nutritional value along with ways to incorporate microgreens into their diet. As of November, we provided a total of 162 servings to the JFS Food Pantry with an estimated value of \$365.

Pe’Ah Forward is Shalom Green’s program that facilitates community members donating their excess produce to the Jewish Family Services Food Pantry. Our Pe’Ah Forward Microgreen Growing program has expanded our produce offerings to JFS and educated the community in a quick and easy indoor method of growing one’s own highly nutritious food. If you would like to learn more or get involved, please email us at info@shalomgreenCLT.org.

Jewish tradition teaches the importance of caring for the environment, for we must act as partners in preserving creation. If you are interested in donating your time or dollars to Shalom Green, please visit our website at www.shalomgreenCLT.org and email us at info@shalomgreenCLT.org. Connect with us on Facebook at Shalom Green: Shalom Park Environmental Initiative and on Instagram @shalomgreen_CLT.



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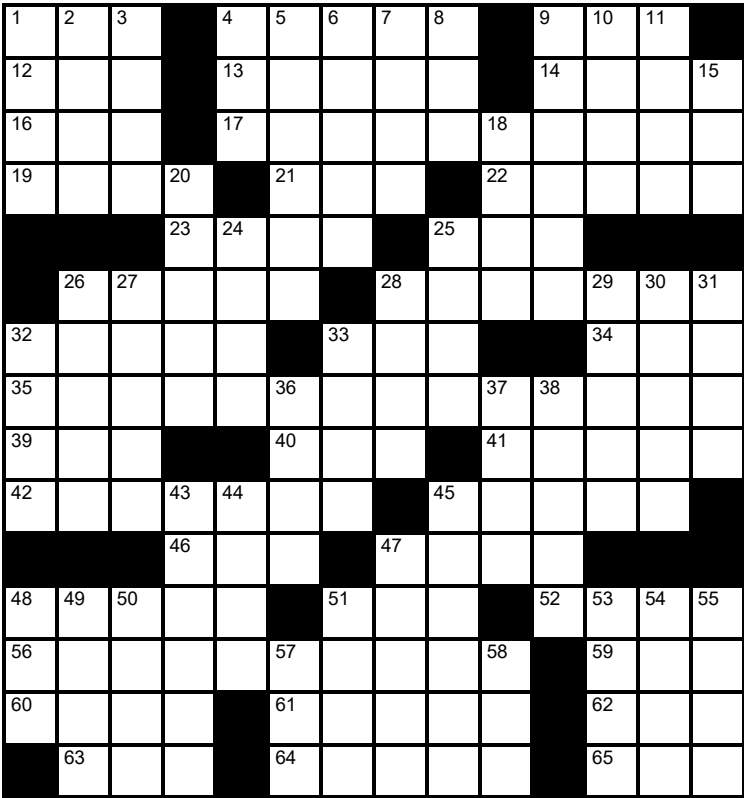


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“Happy Passover”



- Across**

 - 1. Kitchen spray
 - 4. Furious
 - 9. “In Cold Blood” author, informally
 - 12. Had some matzah, e.g.
 - 13. Apt kosher tuna brand
 - 14. Organization that might get your Judaism burning
 - 16. Senator Scott
 - 17. Locates what’s hidden four times in this puzzle
- Down**

 - 1. Brady got most of his rings with them, for short
 - 2. “Let me give you _____, 33. Israeli flag item
 - 3. Office note, briefly
 - 4. Protector of the Jews, for short
 - 5. One looking for the Ark
 - 6. Seymour Skinner’s mother on “The Simpsons”
 - 7. All’s rival
 - 8. Ambulance inits.
 - 9. With a sharp tongue
 - 10. Cambodian currency
 - 11. Gronk pitches this insurance
 - 15. Most TVs, now
 - 18. “Munich” actor Eric
 - 20. Roman fountain name
 - 24. Durable furniture wood
 - 25. “Quiet!”
 - 26. Beit _____, northern Israel town or Valley
 - 27. Nahash of Israel
 - 28. _____ as it is
 - 29. Sinister looks
 - 30. With precision
 - 31. Hard to recollect
 - 32. Great Rav Arika
 - 36. Notable sibling rivalry figure
 - 37. Where most people live
 - 38. Shabbat prayer
 - 43. One laining
 - 44. Poverty, pollution, and such
 - 45. It’s said after 38-Down
 - 47. Flashlight, to a Brit
 - 48. Be short on a payment
 - 49. One building an ark
 - 50. What some Irish speak
 - 51. _____ Yaakov
 - 53. Touch-and-go
 - 54. Actresses Thompson and Salonga
 - 55. Big name in Israeli music
 - 57. Kohen Gadol in Shoftim
 - 58. Farm fodder

(Answers on page 37)

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Education and Youth

Local Jewish Teens Among the Thousands at This Year's CTeen Shabbaton

This year, 3,000 teens from 54 countries participated in the annual CTeen Shabbaton, joined by 200 Israeli peers, including Nova massacre survivors. The annual Times Square Jewish pride event went viral, amassing millions of social media views. Participants engaged in workshops on leadership, mental health, and combating antisemitism. The Jewish Teen Leader of the year was announced at the inspirational closing ceremony event. The teens then visited the Rebbe's Ohel, adding a spiritual dimension. The goal of the 16th annual CTeen Shabbaton: strengthen Jewish pride and identity, empowering teens like Aliya Martin, Jewish Teen Leader of the Year (see pg. 29) to lead in their communities back home.

Finding My Jewish Pride: A CTeen Shabbaton Experience

By Niyana Sorell

Growing up in a school system devoid of Jewish peers, I often felt like a lone star in a vast, unfamiliar galaxy. Forced to suppress my heritage, I yearned for a space to freely celebrate my Jewish identity.

Then, I heard about the CTeen Shabbaton trip, and a spark ignited within me - this was an opportunity I couldn't miss.

From the moment I signed up, a thrill of anticipation crackled through me. Packing my bags became a joyous ritual, each item a promise of connection and belonging. As I stepped off the plane in NYC, a wave of warmth washed over me. I was surrounded by a sea of faces, each reflecting the same spark of pride and passion that I felt burning brightly within myself.

Being in a room with thousands of Jewish teens was an experience unlike any other. It was a tapestry woven from the threads of shared heritage, vibrant traditions, and an unwavering sense of community. The CTeen Shabbaton exceeded every expectation I'd dared to hold.

As I danced, sang, and embraced Shabbat traditions, a profound sense of pride resonated within me. My Jewish roots, once hidden in the shadows, now felt like a source of immense strength and unwavering confidence. Returning home, I no longer felt like an outsider. Instead, I felt like I was surrounded by a family of Jews across the globe, supporting me for who I am.

A Proud Jew.



Charlotte Teens attend CTeen International Shabbaton



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Education and Youth

Local Teen Receives International Recognition: Jewish Teen Leader of the Year Award

In a significant acknowledgment of youth leadership and dedication to community service, Charlotte's very own Aliya Martin has been recognized with the Jewish Teen Leader of the Year award. Aliya's exceptional efforts in spearheading the local CTeen chapter and her substantial contributions to the community have set her apart from hundreds of thousands of Jewish teens worldwide, earning her this international accolade. The announcement was made at the CTeen International Summit, where Aliya was celebrated for her inspiring role in motivating teens around the world.

Aliya's journey with CTeen began as one of the founding members of the Charlotte chapter, quickly rising to the role of president. Under her leadership, the chapter has seen remarkable growth, expanding its membership significantly and inspiring participation in summer programs. Aliya's initiative didn't stop there; she founded a Jewish culture club at her school to celebrate Jewish holidays with both Jewish and non-Jewish students alike. Her voice has been a sta-



Aliya Martin

ple at numerous Israel solidarity events, marking her as a fervent advocate for Jewish pride and community engagement.

Rabbi Levi and Bluma Cohen, Aliya's mentors, and leaders of CTeen Charlotte, as well as program directors Tonya Tessler and Breindel Piekarski, praised her dynamic leadership and the positive impact she's had on her peers. "Aliya's passion and dedication to fostering a vibrant Jewish community are truly in-

spirational. Her efforts have not only strengthened Jewish identity among local teens but have also created a welcoming space for celebrating our heritage," Rabbi Levi Cohen stated.

In her acceptance speech, Aliya expressed her gratitude and reflected on her journey. "Thank you, everyone. I am incredibly honored to receive this award. CTeen has been a pivotal part of my life, helping me embrace my Jewish identity and develop into

the leader I am today. My experiences with CTeen have instilled in me a profound sense of Jewish pride, and I am deeply thankful for the support and encouragement from everyone involved," Aliya remarked.

Highlighting the broader significance of Aliya's work, especially in the wake of the events of October 7, Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky added, "In today's world, where young individuals often seek meaningful ways to make a difference, Aliya stands as a shining example. Her dedication to fostering Jewish identity, community service, and leadership among her peers is a powerful reminder of the impact one person can have on the world."

This year, 3,000 teens from 54 countries participated, joined by 200 Israeli peers, including Nova massacre survivors. The annual Times Square Jewish pride event went viral, amassing millions of social media views. Participants engaged in workshops on leadership, mental health, and combating antisemitism. The Jewish Teen Leader of the year was announced at the inspirational closing cere-

mony event. The teens then visited the Rebbe's Ohel, adding a spiritual dimension. The goal of the 16th annual CTeen Shabbaton: strengthen Jewish pride and identity, empowering teens like Aliya to lead in their communities back home.

CTeen Charlotte, led by Rabbi Levi and Bluma Cohen, is part of the Chabad Teen Network, the world's largest network of Jewish teenagers, encompassing over 730 chapters in 58 countries across six continents. Focused on empowering Jewish teenagers to become leaders in their communities through acts of kindness, community service, and a strong commitment to their values, CTeen is transforming the landscape of Jewish teen engagement.



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Education and Youth

BBYO Returns from Annual International Convention

By Zack Tabachnikoff

Thousands of Jewish teenagers came together under one roof at the Annual International Convention (IC) hosted by BBYO in

February. This year marked the Centennial Edition of the convention, a rare and life-changing experience for all who attended. Teens traveled from across the

United States, Europe, Australia, and even China to participate in the event, creating a truly international gathering.

The convention was filled with unforgettable moments, from emotional reunions between friends who had been apart for months to group sing-alongs of everything from a live Flo Rida concert, to a performance of the Frozen soundtrack, to the Havdalah prayers. Celebrity guest speakers and influential Jewish figures from around the world, such as Josh Peck, Ross Lynch, and Tiffany Haddish, added to the excitement of the weekend.

Members of Charlotte's Eastern Region were proud to bring a delegation of nearly 130 teens to the convention, including Logan Reich of Asheville, North Carolina and Abby Bluestein of Charleston, South Carolina who were elected to the international board. Both teens were elected by their peers for their outstanding leadership within the organization. Logan was also honored with the Ruth Suzman Service and Leadership Award for his work in spearheading a fundraiser of over \$100,000 with BBYO

for ongoing efforts in Israel

In addition to the inspiring leadership displayed by Charlotte's teens, IC offered a wide range of activities including shabbat services, service projects in the Orlando community, sports tournaments, and a block party with food trucks and professional wrestlers. The weekend culminated with a private event at Universal's Islands of Adventure, creating lasting memories for all who attended.

Charlotte's own Lindsay Pfeffer reflected on her experience at IC, expressing gratitude for the support of her peers from both BBG and AZA chapters in Charlotte as she ran her own Saturday morning Shabbat service. The strong sense of community within the Charlotte chapters was evident throughout the convention, showcasing the bonds

that have been formed within the local BBYO community.

Overall, IC 2024 was an unforgettable experience that left a lasting impact on all who attended. The dedication and leadership of Charlotte's teens, particularly Logan and Abby, were celebrated and recognized at the international level. The convention not only provided a platform for teens to connect and learn but also inspired them to make a difference in the world around them. Charlotte's BBYO chapters look forward to continued growth and success in the future, thanks to the opportunities provided by BBYO.







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

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By: Betsy Olinger

It's inconvenient and downright challenging to show up in person and participate in these trying times. We're all tired, yet

With the goal of creating a deeper connection to Judaism, The Mussar Institute (TMI) created “Challenges and Choices” to help teens find meaning and purpose by navigating life choices in healthy ways that



reflect Jewish values, middot. Using practical Jewish wisdom, facilitated discussions, and a focus on social, emotional, and spiritual learning, the program also addresses the mental health stressors brought on by life's challenges facing today's teens.

Each week explores a different and unique middah, or character trait, and introduces the

teens to holistic skills offered by the Mussar masters. Students experience centering activities, multiple ways to understand and process each middah, and practices to bring the middah to life, culminating in a personal practice to “seal in” the learning. Challenges and Choices offers practical ways for teens to become their “best selves” through

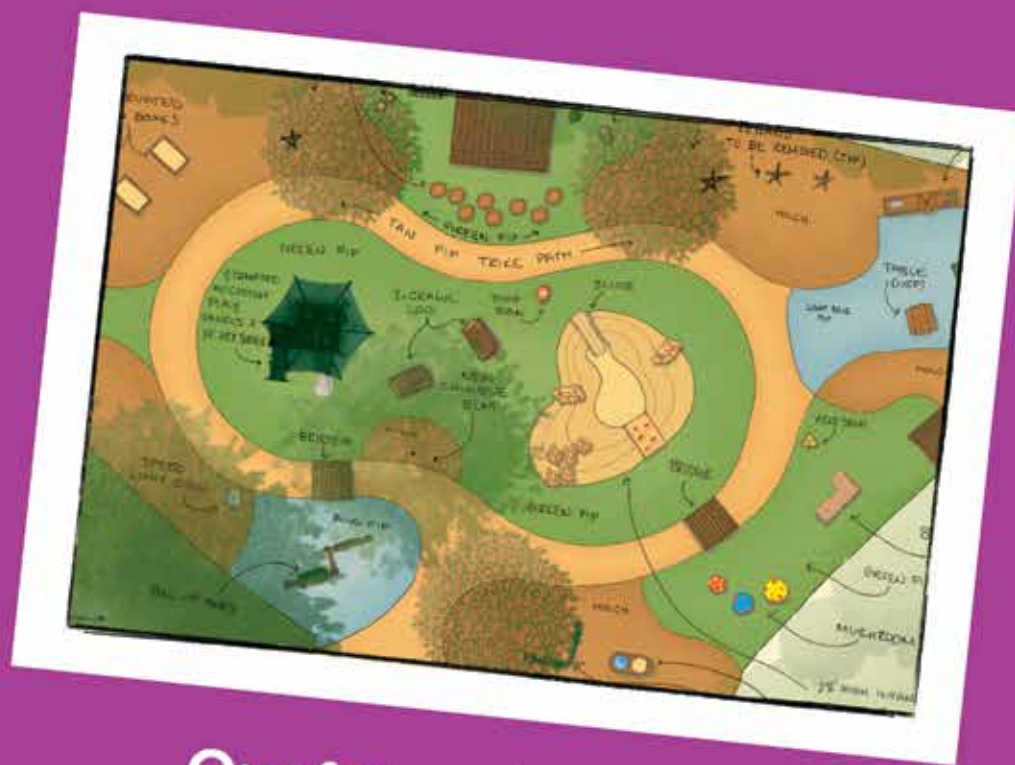
- humility/anavah
- honor/kavod
- envy/kinah
- responsibility/achrayut
- trust/bitachon
- gratitude/hakarat ha'tov
- patience/savlanut
- lovingkindness/chesed
- enthusiasm/zeirzut
- peace-of-mind/menuchah
- ha'nefesh
- silence/sh'tikah

Offered for the third time this spring, 8th-12th grade Hebrew High students absorb Jewish wisdom, debate, and knowledge as they launch into adulthood, actively bringing their Mussar practice to colleges and professional life. I'm comforted and excited by how these teens are present and proud to represent Jewish values. Amen.



ב"ה

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Education and Youth

Charlotte Jewish Day School Wraps Up 12-Week Better Together Program

By Lauren Stark

The Charlotte Jewish Day School (CJDS) middle school students hosted their senior buddies from The Barclay at SouthPark to culminate their 12-week Better Together intergenerational program. The celebration included a tour of their school, a video scrapbook presentation, and a party. Since 2014, the Better Together program has been a nationally recognized leadership program for teens, designed to encourage meaningful interaction between young and old. Through the program, teens build relationships with elders from their community. The Better Together program has a classroom and senior engagement component. The curriculum developed by the non-profit organization offers flexibility for each participating entity to develop their own lessons. The Barbara Sklut Better Together program is made possible through a generous grant from the Legacy Heritage Foundation and is run under the auspices of Friendship Circle of Charlotte.

Last year, Better Together

partnered with the CJDS to visit residents at Brookdale Carriage Club. Among a variety of Jewish holiday engagement activities and general games, the students learned about the Holocaust from Hanna Adler, who survived Kristallnacht and shared many artifacts from her childhood in Nazi Germany.

This year the curriculum focused on leadership skills, appreciating others, and practicing kindness. The students prepared questions for their visits to the senior communities each week. A highlight of this year's program was led by teacher Breindel Piekarski Fake who created a "kindness challenge" rooted in Jewish ethics. Through hands-on activities and games, students learned that each person's work is valued, and a kind word goes a long way to make someone feel accepted and loved.

Weekly visits alternated with residents of Waltonwood Cotswold and The Barclay at SouthPark. During the hour-long visits, students engaged with a senior buddy and with the entire senior group through conversations,

Jewish holiday-themed games, a nosh (food), and art activities. The students bonded with their buddies during these activities and learned about their experiences and childhood memories.

"For many residents, sharing memories from their Jewish childhood was the highlight of their week. Residents commented on how polite, patient, and kind the students were," said Lauren Stark, Better Together program coordinator.

Middle schooler Adley reflected, "Going to the retirement communities was fun because of all the activities we did and all the people I met. Listening to their stories was fascinating because I learned about what life was like when they were kids. Better Together is great for everyone, and it helped me become a better person."

Meleah Grace shared, "Better Together has shown me that it's important to consider different perspectives because everyone has their own way of looking at things. Participating in Better Together is something that I decided I wanted to do. I don't



regret it, and I found it fun to get to know the residents of The Barclay even better."

During the celebratory party, Tom Doty, one of the senior Better Together participants, summed up his heartfelt experience, "These kids gave us all a tremendous amount of hope for the future because, you

know, you just watch TV news and you see what's going on. Well, you know what's going on! You're learning, you're smart, you're growing, and you're learning how to be good people. There's nothing the world needs more than that, so, keep it up. Thank you for involving us."

Vesenia Velasquez, life enrichment director at The Barclay at SouthPark shared, "I really love this program and the benefits it provides the students and our residents."

View the video scrapbook at <https://tinyurl.com/2ufpajut> or scan the below url code.



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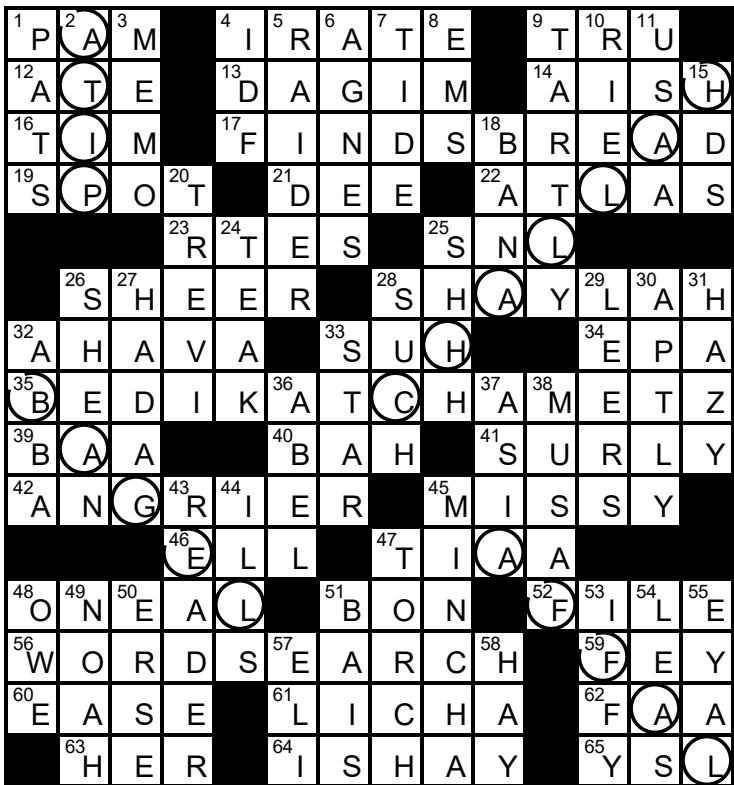
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(Puzzle on page 31)



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Education and Youth

Two Friendship Circle Friends Share the Impact of Their Special Friendship



Jacob and Levi hanging out in Friendship Circle's Inclusive Fun Zone



Jacob and Levi showing off their masterpiece made at Friendship Circle

What Does Friendship Circle Mean to Me?

By Levi Manoyim, Friendship Circle Teen Friend

Ever since I started hanging out with my Friendship Circle Friend Jacob, I have learned to be a better communicator along with having better patience.

Whether it is an activity or just when we are catching up about how our week went, I make sure to be as specific as possible with Jacob because he is very interested in the details.

Additionally, sometimes Jacob wants to do his own thing when we are hanging out and it can be difficult to do something together, so I have learned to be more patient with him and try to compromise so that we can both enjoy our time together.

Overall, hanging out with Jacob is an amazing experience because I get to gain a different perspective on how we approach each other.

What Does Friendship Circle Mean to Me?

By Jacob Kirsh, A Friendship Circle Friend

Friendship Circle means building true friendships.

Asking questions and getting genuine answers. We hang out and play music. You ask your friends what they do for fun. You take turns and compromise. My favorite thing to do with Friendship Circle is the Pajama Walk.

You get to wear your pajamas, talk, walk and make new friends.

One thing I like about Levi, my friend that I meet with every week, is that we have things in common and share interests like playing music and hanging out and talking.

Music video for “Hurricane,” Israel’s Eurovision entry, released after changes that tone down references to October 7

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) After weeks of uncertainty about its participation in the Eurovision Song Contest, Israel has released a video for its entry, “Hurricane,” a reworking of an earlier song called “October Rain” that was rejected for being too political.

The European Broadcasting Union, which runs Eurovision, reportedly barred “October Rain” because of lyrics referring to Hamas’ Oct. 7. attack on Israel. A second-choice song, “Dance Forever,” which also referred to the attack and the massacre at an outdoor dance party, was likewise rejected.

Now, a third version that uses the melody and many of the lyrics from the first song has been approved for the competition, which will take place in Malmo, Sweden, in May.

Key themes of the song, to be performed by the singer Eden Golan, have changed, though some allusions to the attack remain. The word “flowers,” which means “fallen soldiers” in Israeli military jargon, was removed. Part of the chorus, which previously said, “I’m still wet from this October rain” now says, “I’m still broken from this hurricane.”

Shayna Weiss, a scholar of Israeli pop culture, said the song reminded her of Ukraine’s 2016 Eurovision entry, titled “1944,” which won the contest that year.

“I think they tried the Ukraine route,” she said. “1944,” sung by Ukrainian artist Jamala, is about the deportation of the Tatar ethnic minority from Crimea in that year. The song was performed two years after Russia seized and annexed Crimea from Ukraine.

The song didn’t contain direct historical references to the deportation of the Crimean Tatars as ordered by Joseph Stalin, but those familiar with the history knew exactly what it was about, said Weiss.

“Russia complained that the song was too political and Eurovision allowed it. There weren’t direct references in the song,” said Weiss, associate director of

the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis University. “My guess is that they were going for the same playbook with calling it ‘October Rain,’ but [in] the song itself, they were trying not to have references, although obviously there were references in the original lyrics,” Weiss added. “That didn’t work. But I think this is sort of the same playbook. And there are still clear references even in this new version of ‘Hurricane.’ They’re just not as overt.”

“Hurricane” also features a different Hebrew outro than “October Rain.” The original song’s Hebrew lyrics said, “There is no air left to breathe / There is no room / I am gone day to day /

They were all good children, each one of them.”

That has been amended to, “Don’t need big words / Just prayers / Even if it’s hard to see / You always leave me one small light.” Weiss said that the outro clearly alludes to Oct. 7, but added that it allows for “plausible deniability.”

Some of the imagery in the music video can be read to allude to the massacre at the outdoor festival, which was held in a field at Kibbutz Re’im on the Gaza border. The video shows Golan kneeling in a field strewn with fallen leaves, and at another point shows an uprooted tree hanging upside down.

The chorus also contains the words “Baby, promise me you’ll hold me again,” a possible reference to the Israeli hostages taken by Hamas and held captive in Gaza.

The lyrics to the new song were written by Avi Ohayon and Keren Peles, with music written by Ohayon, Peles, and Stav Berger. They are hoping to make “Hurricane” the country’s fifth Eurovision winner; Israel most recently won the competition in 2018 with Netta Barzilai’s “Toy.”

But Israel faced backlash before the song was even released. The EBU is facing pressure to ban Israel from participating in the competition due to the war in Gaza. There is precedent for banning a country from participating in Eurovision due to its policies, such as Russia in 2022 and since during the war in Ukraine. Groups in multiple countries have said they would withdraw from Eurovision if Israel were to compete, but none so far has formally announced a boycott of the competition.

Meg D. Goldstein Attorney-At-Law

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Newspaper archives are a treasure trove of collective memories, providing a snapshot of our history. The following article is from The Charlotte Jewish News, June/July, 2011. To read other issues of The CJN, visit the archives at <https://www.digitalnc.org/newspapers/charlotte-jewish-news-charlotte-nc/>.

Looking Back: Year 2011

Margaret and Lou Schwartz Butterfly Garden Dedicated on Yom HaShoah

Over 500 people from the Charlotte community gathered outdoors at Shalom Park on Sunday, May 1 for the Yom HaShoah service and to dedicate the Children's Holocaust Memorial Sculpture. The sculpture is located in the Margaret and Lous Schwartz Butterfly Garden, named for Holocaust survivors and the parents of Levine JCC board president, Larry Schwartz.

As part of the Yom HaShoah service, twelve survivors and their families were present to light candles in memory of the brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, and cousins who perished in the Holocaust.

The sculpture by Paul Rousso, renowned Charlotte artist, incorporates over 2,800 hand-painted ceramic butterflies, each on crafted in memory of a specific child who died in the Holocaust. The sculpture was the result of The Butterfly Project, which was brought to the Levine Jewish Community Cetner from the San Diego Day School by three very dedicated and talented Levine JCC volunteers, Wilma Asrael, Gwen Orland, and Barbara Ziegler.

Over three years, these women led more than 60 Holocaust education workshops with area school children, as well as with faith and community groups. During the workshops, ceramic butterflies were painted and lessons on intolerance, diversity and acceptance were taught as part of the Project's ongoing commitment to education.

Judy August, past Levine JCC board president and Jill Newman, current Levine JCC board member, spearheaded the fundraising effort to bring the sculpture and garden to Shalom Park. Patty and Bill Gorelick, Sandra and Leon Levine, and Larry Schwartz were prime donors to the project. Thanks to the planning, persistence, and generous contributions of many volunteers and community leaders, what started as a "small dream for making a few butterflies to adorn the Levine Jewish Community Center" became "like a butterfly ... spreading its wings and becoming something very special."

Now the sculptures arching expanse and colorful mosaic instantly draw the eye as one enters the Park. However, the

dedication of this magnificent sculpture is not an end, but a beginning.

The Levine Jewish Community Center and the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library are collaborating to provide educational workshops throughout the Charlotte community on the Holocaust, religious tolerance, diversity, and acceptance. This initiative will include the recruitment and training of volunteers to lead these workshops and fielding inquiries and requests from area schools, churches, and other community groups and agencies.

It is hoped that additional financial and volunteer support will sustain these educational workshops in perpetuity as The Butterfly Project enters the new phase of its development. The Margaret and Lous Schwartz Butterfly Garden, the site for the workshops going forward, will be appreciated not only for its beauty and artistic merit, but also as a haven for reflection and discussions.

Dr. Racelle Weiman, director of The Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education at Temple University, shared in her lecture

following the ceremony the shocking fact that only 7-8" of Jewish children survived Nazi-occupied territory. Only 33% of Jewish adults survived. Thousands of non-Jewish persons who were sympathizers, disabled, homosexual, or otherwise deemed undesirable were also eliminated.

But out of our collective memory of this tragic and horrible past, the seeds of hope and peace can germinate. One wonderful surprise that came about through preparation for this year's Yom HaShoah observance was a play created by local teens, named "Who Will Tell Their Story? Passing on the Legacy." It recounts the early lives of Holocaust survivors Suly Chenkin and Irving Bienstock. The play's executive producer, Wilma Asrael, said the process of creating the play was moving and she greatly respected the "amazing teens who have all shown continuing commitment to the work, understanding and a joy of life seldom seen."

During this year's Yom HaShoah service, Rabbi Judy Schindler reflected, "As Jews,

we are called to continually move forward: from despair to embracing life, from fear to faith, from ashes to hope."

Rabbi Yossi Groner of Congregation Ohr HaTorah stated, "Today we look at this memorial as a beacon of hope and we resolve to raise our children in a better world where evil no longer has a place. We educate our children to be living Torah scrolls where the words of God are written in their minds and hearts."

Live butterflies were released at the close of the service. As the butterflies tested their wings and broke free of their paper "chrysalises," the sun broke through the cloudy skies.

If you are interested in making a donation, volunteering, or would like to get more information about the educational workshops, please visit The Butterfly Project at www.charlottejcc.org or email butterfly-project@charlottejcc.org.



On any given day, you'll find a range of options to fuel your passions, meet new friends and enjoy a lifestyle rich with interesting and exciting educational and engaging programs. Learn more about our rental senior living community at TheBarclayatSouthPark.com or schedule a visit at 980.825.4211.

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