

makoreh

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Jewish Community Life in Regional Canada

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Message from Leadership

Mark Siegel, M.D.
RJCO Chair

Dear Friends,

Since the launch of this newsletter last autumn a number of exciting developments have occurred that may directly impact our respective regional Jewish communities. They deserve comment.

Most significantly has been the approval of the JFC-UIA 3-year strategic plan by the Board which, among other things, affirms the organization's core goal of, "assisting the quality of Jewish life in the small and regional Canadian communities by connecting them to the larger Jewish scene and to Israel". So, how does this really affect me, you might ask? The answer lies partially in the process; the rest lies with ourselves.

The process has produced a newly formed entity called the Regional Communities Council, and I have volunteered to be its chair. The council will be a permanent means of engaging the leaders of our smaller Jewish communities across Canada, giving a voice to our challenges and concerns that goes directly to the Board of Directors. It is hoped that this will be a means of developing solutions to our common problems, sharing successes and thereby creating efficiencies in areas such as local and national fundraising and leadership development. The latter are key areas of interest of our national leadership.

Secondly, your national advocacy body, The Centre for Israel Jewish Affairs, has just concluded its program proposal process and has accepted feedback and reviews of its annual funding requests, vetted by its Local Partner Councils. This process means to enhance the participation by the regional Jewish communities at the local level, helping to realize advocacy and engagement programs that are of interest to specific communities.

These initiatives are the expression of JFC-UIA's commitment to our mandate of representing ALL of the Canadian Jewish collective. However, the challenge is for those of us scattered outside the larger centres to pick up the torch and run with these initiatives. It is up to all of us in the small regional Jewish communities to take advantage of the resources available to strengthen our communities.

As the board member representing small communities on the JFC-UIA Board I will endeavour to keep your voice and needs front and centre. I need to have your participation to make them truly yours.

Sincerely,
Mark Siegel

Campus Spotlight

Queen's University



Shalom Chaverim,

These are exciting times at Queen's Hillel. Kingston Ontario has long provided a welcoming and dynamic "home away from home" for Jewish students. However, in the past few years we have witnessed an explosion in our Jewish student population and a renaissance of Jewish campus life.

One of our most noticeable and productive indicators of growth has been the addition of a Jewish Agency for Israel Fellow to the Queen's Hillel team. Eliya Eizerikova has worked with Queen's Hillel and Queen's Israel on Campus to provide innovative programming and engagement opportunities, connecting students to their Judaism and to the State of Israel.

Whether she is working with the Hebrew Language Department to create a weekly conversational Hebrew club, implementing sophisticated programming highlighting Israeli culture or working with students one-on-one to explore their relationship to their Jewish values, Eliya has brought a little bit of Israel to Kingston.

The added value of having an Israel Fellow on campus is immeasurable. It has not only strengthened the Jewish community, but has improved Israeli education on campus and broadened the relationships Queen's Hillel has created on campus with other clubs, student government, administration and faculty. Above all, Eliya has helped us create a real Israeli presence at Queen's.



Eliya Eizerikova (left) with Queen's Hillel Students

As the Jewish student population continues to grow and thrive at Queen's University, Queen's Hillel remains committed to meeting the evolving needs of our community. With one of the most active and engaged student leadership boards in Canada and unprecedented attendance at our events, Queen's Hillel has become a leader and trend-setter within Hillel Canada. Eliya's success as a Jewish Agency for Israel Fellow, reaching and engaging young Jewish adults, represents the type of development and commitment to Jewish values that drives Queen's Hillel.

We look forward to continued growth and success as Kingston continues to be a new hot-spot for Jewish campus life.

Kol Tuv,

Rob Nagus rnagus@jfcuia.org

Director, Queen's Hillel

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Dvar Torah The True Miracle of Passover

By Rabbi Nevo Zuckerman, Kitchener, ON

Many Jews start to cringe when they think about Passover, specifically about all the steps required in order to

properly prepare for this Jewish holiday – from cleaning to shopping to cooking to the actual Seder.

While most of the Jewish world thinks like this, I have a different view of this holiday. People approach me all the time to ask me, “Rabbi, wouldn’t it be amazing to live in the times of Miracles? Could you imagine living in the time of the Makkot (Ten Plagues), Kariat Yam Suf (splitting of the sea), and Mattan Torah (receiving the Torah)?”

Rabbi Yaakov Emden, who lived in Germany around 250 years ago said, “When I consider the miracles of the existence of the Jewish people, it is greater in my eyes than leaving Egypt and all the miracles that God did.”

The miracle that Rabbi Yaakov Emden is speaking about is the fact that the Jewish people even exist today.

If we take a look back to the 10 plagues, Hashem had a reason to create them. Why were there 10 plagues and not one? It was not to make the Egyptians believe in the God but to make the Jewish people have ‘Emuna’ - belief in God. When I was a child, my rebbe would say to us, “We the Jewish people forget how strong our emuna could be.”

To understand Rabbi Emden, we take a look back to see that throughout history, nations and people have tried to destroy us. Our belief in God is why we are still here today! Rabbi Emden shows us this in our Haggada with the famous song,

‘Vehi She’amda, La’avotainu Velanu Shelo Echad Bilvad, Amad Aleinu Lechaloteinu Ela Sheb’chol Dor VaDor Omdim Aleinu Lechaloteinu V’HaKadosh Baruch Hu Matzilenu Miyadam.’

Hashem’s blessings and the Torah that kept our fathers is what keeps us surviving to this day. In every generation attempts have been made to try to destroy us - the Greek, Roman and Persian Empires, the Spanish Inquisition, Chmelnitzky Massacres, Pogroms and the Holocaust to name just a few - yet Hashem continues to save us from our enemy’s hands. After all these spiritual and physical attacks over time, we still exist today. This within itself is a miracle.

Knowing this, how can I not love the Passover holiday? It represents and increases my Emuna in Hashem.

May you and your family have a meaningful and wonderful Pesach.

Rabbi Nevo Zuckerman

150 YEARS AND COUNTING!



Congregation Emanu-El in Victoria, BC

On June 2, 2013, Victoria’s Congregation Emanu-El will celebrate its 150th anniversary. As Canada’s oldest synagogue in continuous operation, this is truly a national milestone.

Community support has been strong. Renovations to bring the synagogue through another 150 years, funded in part by generous donations, have begun and many exciting events are planned. Volunteers on many committees - Jewish Arts, Historical, Souvenirs, Gala – are working hard to make 2013 an extraordinary year of commemoration, celebration, and education. Events include photo and art exhibitions, theatrical and musical performances, and educational seminars on the history of Congregation Emanu-El.

All are welcome to join in the festivities. For more information on celebrations and the synagogue’s history visit www.congregationemanu-el.ca/ee150.



Program Spotlight

PJ Library Registration Now Open

Jewish Federations of Canada-UJA is excited to announce a partnership with the Grinspoon Foundation in order to offer 200 PJ Library subscriptions to Jewish families living in regional communities throughout the Atlantic provinces and Ontario.

The PJ Library sends free books and audio CDs to Jewish children throughout North America.

With over 250 book titles in rotation, a subscribed family will receive one Jewish themed book monthly, specific to the age of the child who is subscribed. In the 12th month, children receive an audio CD instead of the regular book. Books are published specifically for the PJ Library program and include discussion questions and insights on the inner flap of each book for parents to further engage their kids.

The best part is that it's free! Call Daniel Stern at 416-634-3082 or email DStern@jfcuia.org to sign up today!

** The PJ library subscriptions are limited and only available to residents of Ontario and the Atlantic provinces*

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Community Spotlight

How to be Jewish in Thunder Bay

**Susan Goldberg &
the Thunder Bay Youth Program**

When Susan Goldberg and her partner moved north from Toronto nine years ago, the biggest challenge they faced was not just the colder weather in Thunder Bay. As their family grew, they struggled to find ways to introduce their two sons to Jewish culture and community. "We couldn't just fly to Toronto for every holiday," says Susan, "although we did do that for a while."

With a population just over 100,000, Thunder Bay is home to a very small Jewish community. Initially, Susan met some other young Jewish families through the university community. Eventually, they joined the local synagogue, Shaarey Shomayim. "Interestingly, several other couples, where one or both partners was Jewish, moved here around the same time as we did, and then we all had children. So the next logical step was to establish a Hebrew school."

More recently, the congregation has begun to search for ways to allow its member, of all ages, to regularly socialize and celebrate their Judaism at the same time. With funding from Jewish Federations of Canada-UJA, Susan took on the role of coordinating a monthly social event. Since September, she has coordinated multiple community events that have connected families throughout the city.

In cooperation with local institutions and organizations, events have included holiday celebrations for Chanukah, Purim, and Tu Bishvat. An evening of Israeli dancing that provided child care services allowed parents to get footloose knowing their kids were being entertained as well.

Outreach to Jewish students at Lakehead University continues to attract young people to community events. In conjunction with Lakehead University, a public lecture on the topic of post-colonial Jewish literature in South Asia is scheduled for May. Spring will also bring a Havdallah bonfire in the Spirit Garden at the recently renovated Prince Arthur's Landing on Lake Superior.

"There's no one answer as to how to be Jewish in Thunder Bay," says Goldberg. "But I think it's key to program for the community you have, not the community you wish you had or that you used to have. We find creative ways to host events, given the size of the community and the limited resources available. But we're making it happen, and I can say with certainty that my sons are growing up with an understanding of themselves as part of a wider Jewish community."

**Jewish Federations of Canada –UJA provides funding for the Local Youth Program Coordinator position. For more information on bringing this partnership to your community, and on other regional community programs, contact Daniel Stern at dstern@jfcuia.org.*