

In This issue

- PJ Library
- K-W Walk for Israel
- Jewish Sudbury
- ABSHOP starts up
- U of Guelph Hillel



Message from Leadership

Mark Siegel, M.D.
RJCO Chair

I am writing this message to you at the launch of the first edition of this newsletter as the Chair of RJCO which I gladly assumed last year when Ernie Ginsler stepped down after many years of service.

My past experience has been as a long-standing, community representative from Peterborough sitting on the regional Board of RJCO. I have also been a director on the Board of Beth Israel Congregation and currently its Vice President and Past President.

My recent appointments to Jewish Federations of Canada – UIA (JFC-UIA) Board of directors has been a challenging learning curve for me which I took on with some doubt about the institutional support for our communities.

My doubts have been assuaged by the following observations and experiences in the past year.

Firstly, and most importantly, is the presence of myself as RJCO Chair - backed by the professional staff of RJCO Daniel Stern, Perry Romberg and Evan Mendel - as a PERMANENT director position of the renamed JFC-UIA Board of Directors. This guarantees all of us a strong voice in the hierarchy of policy making at the Board level.

Secondly, the reconfiguration and shrinking of the JFC-UIA Board of Directors has allowed it to be more functional

yet still retain its representational qualities. Working committees will ensure the reworking of policy and more efficient implementation of decisions.

Thirdly, the inclusion of the following resolution approved at the June 2012 JFC-UIA Board meeting the following statement is emblematic of the change in its mission to serve the needs of the 'wider Canadian Jewish collective', including federated and non-federated small Jewish communities and of course, meeting ongoing requirements in Israel.

The new mission statement is:

"To assist in sustaining the quality of Jewish life in the small and regional Canadian communities by connecting them to the larger Canadian Jewish scene and to Israel."

Recently, I have been invited by Linda Kislwicz, President & CEO of JFC-UIA, to participate in the Strategic Planning Working Group to ensure that our voice is present 'at the table' when policy is developed. This group will be meeting shortly and is direct evidence of intention becoming action in terms of desire of the JFC-UIA leadership to ensure that small communities are represented in policy deliberations.

We are fortunate to have a dedicated professional staff to provide for our disparate needs, because therein lies the challenge! The launch of this newslet-

ter is one method of trying to bring us together, to become engaged and more aware of issues common to us. Please consider contributing to future issues and distributing it to your fellow community members and organizations.

Additionally, your advocacy organization, The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) which is funded by JFC-UIA with your dollars, has reached out to local partners from your communities to be part of the approval structure and provide feedback. If you have not already done so, consider joining as a local partner member so, so that your voice will be heard and your influence applied to where CIJA resources are distributed. As Chair of the Regional Local Partnership for RJCO under the auspices of CIJA, I will try to ensure that your voice is heard here as well! Finding a common agenda will be an ongoing but not insurmountable challenge.

If there are needs specific to your community, we would like to hear about them. Please let us know how we might help. I wish to make my role as RJCO chair more representative of your needs, as I realize that my appointment to the JFC-UIA Board was not done with your input. I am open to your input and comments and will endeavour to represent your interests.

University of Guelph Hillel

By Amanda Cait

There's something about the University of Guelph campus and the people living here that allows you to have this unique sense of community. Although I felt like everything was perfect, I couldn't help but feel that there was a missing piece to my puzzle. I grew up going to Hebrew schools and Jewish youth groups and loved it. But sometimes I felt that these programs were trying to make me more religious. So I was skeptical about joining Guelph Hillel.

Eventually I went to a bagel lunch - it's very hard to find lox and cream cheese in Guelph so I was super excited! After a few events, I felt I found the missing piece to my puzzle. Guelph Hillel programs are more about being proud to

be Jewish than about religion.

There are about 800-1000 Jewish students at U of G, and about 400 are members and 250 regularly attend Hillel programs. Last year we ran a coffee house, a Size Doesn't Matter party, an opening BBQ on Israel day and many Shabbat dinners and bagel lunches. We have a lot of events planned for this year! Over 100 students already attended Open Mic Night, a multi-faith program where anyone who wanted showed off their talents to the audience. It was one of the largest, most successful multi-faith events at Guelph.

We believe that in order to get the students involved we need to form a close relationship with them, find out who

they are, what they are interested in and passionate about so that we can help them find and be proud of their Jewish identity and heritage.

With Daniel Levitt, our new Hillel Director, on board, I know it's going to be an amazing, productive and memorable year. When asked of the Guelph Hillel executive asked "What's the first thing you'll do as the new Hillel Director?" Daniel responded "Hit the ground running!" and he has done just that! We're so excited to have Daniel, Naomi and their family with us.

We are looking forward to this upcoming year and are hoping to inspire as many students as possible to embrace their Judaism.



The Aviva Barth High School Outreach Program is a social and educational program geared toward Jewish teens living in small Jewish communities across Ontario. As a general rule, the smaller the community and the further away from a major city, the less likely it is that local teens will receive a formal Jewish education or have much opportunity to socialize with other Jewish peers.

Many of these small-town Jewish teens have Jewish friends from summer camp, though it is rare that those friends are able to relate to the feeling of being the only Jewish person in a high school. This happens to be the reality for the majority of the program's participants.

Program Spotlight

The Aviva Barth High School Outreach Program

The Aviva Barth High School Outreach Program gives teens from non-federated communities throughout Ontario the opportunity to build relationships with others who have similar Jewish upbringings. A diverse curriculum provides interactive Jewish and Israel programming and the opportunity to travel to New York, Washington DC and Israel. From start to finish, it is a well rounded and fun educational experience.

As the program's three-year cycle concluded this past June, teens from Ontario's regional communities are encouraged to join in the Aviva Barth High School Outreach Program cycle that begins this October, 2012.

"I grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, a small town of 80,000 people in Northern Ontario. We have a small but vibrant Jewish community but I am the only Jewish

kid at my high school. I was brought up in a kosher home and had a strong synagogue life. My father is one of the leaders in synagogue and his family has been highly involved for generations.

I was a bit nervous about participating because of the distance (8 hour drive) and was a bit shy to meet a whole group of new people. In grade 11, I went to my first shabbaton in Oshawa and was welcomed with a warm reception by other teens. I instantly felt at home and that I had a connection with the other teens.

Joining ABHSOP was an awesome decision! I made really good friends and got to travel. I learned a lot about Israel and Jewish identity though all of the educational programs as well. This program definitely reinforced my personal Jewish identity. It's a long schlep to all of the Shabbatonim, but it's always worth it!"
Rebecca Cohen, Sault Ste. Marie

Dvar Torah

Can we blame G-d for our mistakes?!

By Rabbi Yosef Goldman, Fredericton, NB

It is human nature and common behaviour that when we make a mistake, we tend to blame someone else for it. This is true whether you are a child or an adult, male or female, an important business executive or a street cleaner.

The first time this happened ever was on Rosh Hashana. According to our tradition, Adam & Eve were created on the sixth day of Creation, which we now celebrate as the beginning of the Jewish year. Some of our Sages state in the Talmud that on the same day they were created, Adam & Eve already sinned, but were only expelled from the Garden of Eden on Saturday night. If this opinion is correct, then Adam's sin was that he blamed his wife Eve of giving him the fruit of the forbidden tree, and not taking responsibility for his own actions.

When we pray to G-d on Rosh Hashana, do we pay attention to what we are asking for or announcing to the world? On this very special and holy day, we pray much longer than a regular Shabbat, we blow the ram's horn and we celebrate many different rituals. I would like to suggest a new perspective of what this is all about.

Our Sages who compiled the prayer books for the High Holydays, had in mind a very specific goal – to allow the community and the individual to realize what type of relationship they want with G-d in the coming year. On this very holy day, you must decide whether to follow your desires as an individualist, or to involve yourself with the community and G-d. Of course, there are pluses and minuses to each path, like everything else in life – you have a very balanced free choice. If you choose to walk alone in the path of life – you will never have anybody to blame but yourself, but the plus is you may never make a mistake and have a very good and secure life. If you choose to be more involved with others – I believe you are entitled in some cases to blame others, and surprisingly – even G-d. Rav Sheshet who was a disciple of Rabbi Judah the Prince (3rd Century CE) asked G-d to become blind so he would not be tempted to commit sins of the flesh. We are not on that level, and I am not sure what he was thinking, but our prayers must reflect what we are feeling. The prayers are written in the plural to reflect that

even if I personally did not commit this sin or the other, as a community we are asking G-d for help in correcting these sins, and B. we are declaring that since G-d is also our King, we demand that He understand and forgive our shortcomings.

Sometimes I think of G-d as the mice in Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, it seems to me that He is experimenting with us. Yes, He gave us a guide book in the form of the Torah, but He didn't tell us how easy it will be to stumble and fall. King David said in his wisdom: "Seven times will a righteous man fall, and get up again" – but, truthfully, it is maybe 700 thousand! I don't believe all of my mistakes are His fault, but I am pretty sure many of them are, because He created us with such strong desires.

From the Fredericton Jewish Community and me, we wish you all a Happy, Healthy and Very Good & Sweet New Jewish Year!

May Hashem accept all of your prayers.

Kitchener-Waterloo Walk for Israel



On Sunday, June 3rd over 100 community members of the Kitchener-Waterloo and Wellington Jewish community gathered for a 5-km Walk for Israel which raised over \$10,000 for Youth Futures, a Jewish Agency for Israel program that supports Israeli youth-at-risk.

"The Walk for Israel is an ideal way for people to raise money for a great cause while spending time with family and friends and enjoying a good walk on a spring day." said Jeff Budd, the fundraiser event organizer. *"This is a long awaited occurrence and we are thrilled to bring it back to the community after more than 25 years."*

The 5 km route started and finished at Beth Jacob Synagogue. A kosher meal afterwards was sponsored by the Waterloo Region Jewish Community Council.

Sponsors included Miller Thomson LLP, the Grand River Cancer Clinic, Jewish Federations of Canada – UIA and Beth Jacob Synagogue.



Program Spotlight

PJ Library Coming soon!

The PJ Library is a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, in which philanthropists and local Jewish organizations partner together to send 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, specific to the age of the child who is subscribed, per month for each month of the year. In the 12th month, children will 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.

Jewish Federations of Canada- UIA is excited to announce a partnership with the Grinspoon Foundation in order to offer 150 PJ Library subscriptions to all regional Jewish communities throughout the province of Ontario.

The best part is that it's free... all you have to do is subscribe! It's on a first come first serve basis so sign up today! The PJ Library will be launched in Ontario's non-federated Communities in the late fall of 2012. Call Daniel Stern at 416.636.7655 to sign up today!



Community Spotlight

Jewish Sudbury Today - Challenge and Change

By Emily Caruso Parnell

Board President, Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue

Jewish life in a small city is full of challenges. Kosher food, keeping Shabbat, holidays, service leadership, building maintenance - if many hands make light work then few Jewish hands make for some heavy lifting sometimes. Sudbury's Jewish community has withstood many storms over its 100-plus years and the last few years haven't been any different. We have struggled but continue to persevere.

One of our most significant struggles has been around defining ourselves as a community and identifying where we fall on the spectrum of Jewish practice. For many decades Sudbury's synagogue was nominally Orthodox (though not formally affiliated). In practice, this meant that while nearly everyone drove to synagogue and lived a secular lifestyle, within the four walls of the synagogue some elements of Orthodox halacha were maintained. Most notably, this nominal Orthodoxy meant that while the seating was mixed, women were excluded from counting in minyanim. Periodically, the status quo would be challenged (during a bat mitzvah,

for instance) and interpersonal conflicts would flare up but the issue remained unresolved for many years.

Several years ago, the issue came to a head as it became evident that we might not be able to put together a male-only minyan for the High Holidays. Unfortunately, change came too quickly for some and contentious issues such as the distribution of aliyot and other Torah honours remained unresolved. We have since worked through these issues and have come to a more peaceful understanding within the community.

All services are now egalitarian but the style of the service varies with leadership. When I lead, I conduct a more Reform-style service while other community members lead a more Conservative or Orthodox-style service, depending on their preference. This compromise position, while by no means perfect, has allowed us to continue to maintain a diverse community, our building and our presence in the community at large while remaining welcoming to newcomers. We are now optimistic that we'll be here for many more years to come.

For more information on Jewish Federations of Canada - UIA call 416-636-7655 or contact Daniel Stern, Director of Campaign and Regional Community Services at DStern@jfcuia.org


 JEWISH FEDERATIONS OF CANADA - UIA
 הפדרציות היהודיות בקנדה - UIA
 FÉDÉRATIONS JUIVES DU CANADA - UIA

2012 ANNUAL CAMPAIGN

TOGETHER
WE
 DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS

give today at www.jewishcanada.org or call 416.636.7655