

The Jewish VOICE

Informing and Connecting Jews in El Paso-Las Cruces

Tammuz/Av/Elul 5780
July/August 2020

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Jewish Federation
OF GREATER EL PASO

Up Close: Monika Kimball

At the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso's 83rd Annual Meeting we welcomed Monika Kimball as President. She's the first Las Cruces community member to hold the position since the Federation added Las Cruces to our regional Jewish community in 2015.

Since Monika and her husband Bob moved to Las Cruces in 2011 from Michigan, she has been active and taken on leadership roles at Temple Beth-El, the Reform synagogue in her new hometown. Over the last two years, she has been a key member of the Federation's board and its activities, including co-chairing the remarkable Israel@71 celebration at Keystone Heritage Park last year. Most recently, she has been a member of the Federation's executive committee and is well-versed in Federation mission and programs.

An unusual childhood

As we all cope with days of staying home, Monika joked "that every day is like the Groundhog Day movie, a repeat of the day before." February 2 holds a special meaning for her: she was born on that day in 1945 in an air raid shelter under a hospital in Berlin. "They put the mothers and newborns in the basement for extra safety," she said. "The very next day, February 3, brought the War's heaviest Allied bombing on the city."

Her father's family was Swiss, and her mother's German. Her maternal grandfather experienced severe torture by the Nazis and helped with the "de-Nazification" of Berlin, helping the U.S. Army identify Nazis in the community.

In 1961, she saw the Berlin Wall going up, moving from a barbed-wire fence to a tall wall slicing through buildings and streets. In 1963 she waved at President Kennedy as his motorcade slowly passed by.

A life of teaching

Monika left Germany after marrying a member of the American military based in Berlin. The military life took them to several states and countries and eventually to Fort Bliss where she is proud to have met Gen. Omar Bradley. She raised their two daughters, often alone when her husband was stationed in Vietnam, Korea and other posts.

After teaching German in high school and at Eastern Michigan University she got a master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). After all, English is her second language as well. She was hired to launch and chair the TESOL Program at Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan, for the next 20 years. "With help from my dedicated faculty I grew the department to include 100- to 400-level courses and a graduate program," she recalled. "It was very rewarding."

She eventually met and married Robert Kimball, who was the dean of the College of Education at the university. Their 25th anniversary is July 15.

Travel and Las Cruces

Professional and pleasure trips have taken the couple all over the world in their 25 years to about 50 countries from Antarctica, Australia and Africa to the Middle East and most of Europe. Monika's travelled extensively on her own as well, teaching in Japan for many summers with some projects taking her to China, Korea, and Taiwan.

It was a trip to Ruidoso to visit friends that led to the move from their home in Ann Arbor. Although they miss being able to kayak in the Great Lakes and local rivers after work as they used to enjoy on a regular basis, they love their new city for its warmth and culture. Every summer has found them at the Santa Fe Opera and on a three- or four-week world trip, but this year is different.

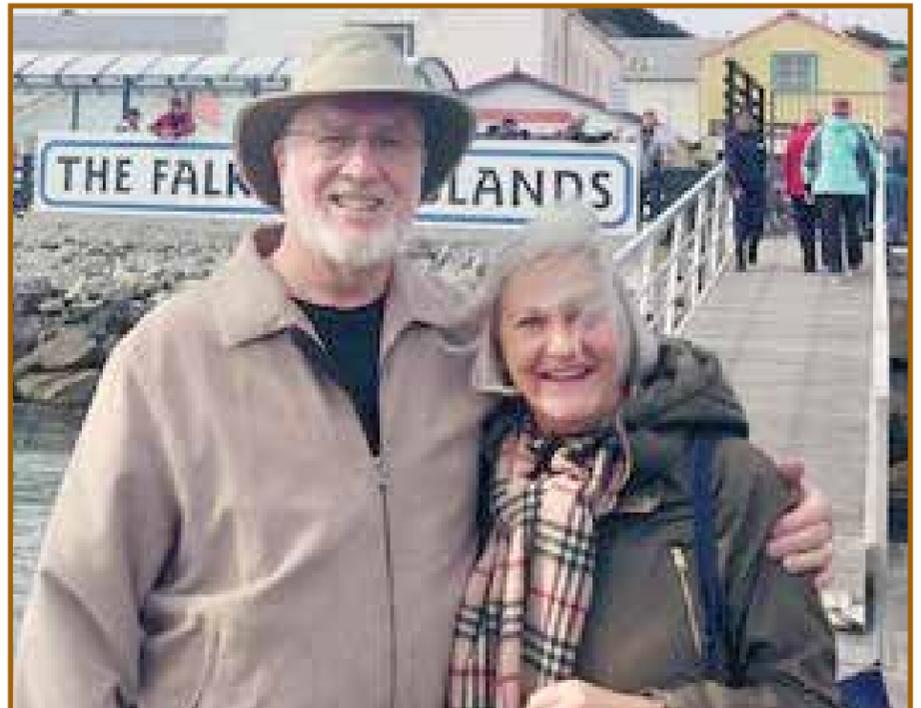
One of her goals is to bring the Jewish communities of the two cities closer together. It's a funny paradox, she laughed. To Las Cruces residents, El Paso seems close; to El Paso residents, Las Cruces seems far away! We can expect to have a bright new perspective on both of the sister cities in Monika Kimball's tenure as the 42nd president of our Federation.

Spouse's name: Robert Q. Kimball, Ph.D.

Children's names: Angela Brockman (James), Claudene Blake (Michael)

Parents' names: Friedeman and Irmgard Seiler

Birthplace: Berlin, Germany



Bob and Monika at the Falkland Islands

What do you value most in your friends?

Honesty.

What might we be surprised to learn about one of your interests or hobbies?

We have a lap pool in the backyard and I swim a mile every day, year-round.

When it is a good time to travel again, where do you want to go?

Bob and I have been world travelers in our professional lives and post retirement, but there are a places we'd still like to see. For example, the Chilean Fjords, Easter Island and the areas near the Arctic Circle in the winter.

Who's your favorite Jewish hero (living or not/fictional or not) and why?

Emma Lazarus. A giant among Jewish women, she called for a homeland before the term Zionism was ever coined. She railed against antisemitism as we do today. Moreover, she was a poet, an activist and advocate for immigrants. Her ideas are as pertinent now as they were in the 19th century, which is clear evidence of her genius. Her epic words, "Until we are all free, we are none of us free" currently echo all across this land.

What is your favorite Jewish holiday and why?

Even though it is not a major Jewish holiday, I like Chanukah the best, because the magic of lighting the candles for eight nights in a row and

telling the story of the Maccabees shows joy, hope and the perseverance of the Jewish people.

What made you decide to take on leadership roles at Temple Beth-El (TBE)?

We chose Las Cruces as our retirement community and it welcomed us warmly. Having been in leadership positions in higher education, I hoped that those skills might be useful as a volunteer in service to my community. In my roles at TBE as board member, Adult Education chairperson, vice president, and president, I have learned and grown as a Jewish woman and as a congregant.

Why is it important for someone from Las Cruces to step into the president's role?

I think that coming from "out of town" to assume a leadership position can be beneficial, because it provides a new set of eyes which see situations and circumstances in a new light. Lacking history has its own challenges of course, but its benefits can lead to a novel course of action for the betterment of the organization as a whole.

What would you say to encourage others to take leadership roles in our Jewish community?

I would say that if you engage with your community, you not only fulfill a mitzvah, and impact it in a positive way, but your participation will enrich your own life beyond expectation.



Monika speaking at the 2020 Federation Pacesetters meeting

Teens Talk: El Paso to Israel

Teens Talk with Israel was a three-week Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso program in association with the Israel Trauma Coalition (see February 2020 Jewish Voice coverage of ITC). Teenagers from the El Paso area and Israel signed in to Zoom together Sundays.

Due to the 9-hour time difference we had a few occasions of our local young people rolling out of bed just in time and Israeli parents calling for their sons or daughters to come to the dinner table at the end of a session. However, everyone in attendance enjoyed the company no matter what the timing.

So much so, that a few attendees from both the United States and Israel have requested the program continue.

El Paso teens included Aydyn Bush, Andrew Cabrera, Macy Gluck, and Riley Miner. Our moderators – retired high school teacher Rachelle Gomolsky,

Dafna Avidad from the ITC, and I – helped occasionally quiet teens by starting conversations on a few focused questions:

- How do I feel?
- How does this period impact my life?
- How I am coping?
- What can I do or contribute to the community?

Teenagers discussed everything from limited contact with friends and missed graduation opportunities to changed college plans and frustrations with increasing Covid-19 rates.

As the teenagers began to get to know each other, conversations started about favorite foods and movies, plans for college, staying in constant close quarters with younger siblings and parents, living in a Kibbutz, taking a volunteer year or enrolling in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and more.

At the end of our fourth and final



session on June 21, a few teens expected that they would meet again. We have decided to continue to support the teens who would like to meet with each other. There are still opportunities for teens to join the conversation.

Share your email with LetsConnect@JFedElPaso.org, and we can give the

Zoom information for Teens Talk, a conversation that will be happening all summer.

*Naomi Estrada
Program and Engagement Coordinator
Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso*



"When meeting teens from Israel, I discovered we have a lot more in common than I initially thought. As my first experience talking to anyone from Israel, I was nervous. I wondered about what normal things I do in America that I may be judged for in Israel and how I was less religious than they were, but I soon learned that didn't matter. We all agreed on a lot of things and had similar lifestyles and hobbies. I cracked a few jokes and I can now say from experience there's nothing more mind-blowing than making someone laugh from halfway across the world."

—Andrew Caberera, El Paso

"This zoom experience with the Americans and Israelis was a very good opportunity to have, especially during quarantine. It helped me meet new people, open up and also have a great laugh. This is an experience I will never forget! Thank you and look forward to really meeting someday not just from behind a screen."

*—Henry French
Tel Mond, Israel*

These We Honor With Tributes

Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

To: Mimi Pittle and family in memory of your beloved husband, father and grandfather

To: Maurice and Diana Pleasant in Honor of Your 31st Wedding Anniversary

To: Monika Kimball in Honor of Becoming President of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

From: Cindy Graff Cohen, Greg Cohen and Hally Cohen

From: John and Lourdes Eger

From: Frances Williams

The Jewish VOICE

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

The Jewish Voice of El Paso, published ten times a year, is dedicated to informing, educating, and uniting the Jewish community by providing news items of local, national, Israeli and international concern.

The Jewish Voice will consider for publication any materials submitted that support the mission of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso and have relevance and appeal to the El Paso Jewish community. Articles are subject to editing at the editor's discretion and are subject to space limitations. Letters cannot be longer than 150 words and articles must be kept to a maximum of 300 words. Please email to thevoice@jfedelpaso.org

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Campaign Director: Sue Bendalin
President: Monika Kimball
Office: 915-842-9554
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Todah Rabah to Our Volunteers

My Funny Quarantine

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Annual Meeting

Stephanie Calvo, Carlos Gamez, Steve Haydu, Debra Kanof, Bob and Elaine Krasne, Michael Mandel, Adam Rosenfield and Lauren Eisenberg, and Debbie Stein

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Borderlands Café Europa

Deb Benedict, Peter Svarzbein, and Joanne Turnbull

Musicians Who "Strung" into Action

Chris Beroes-Haigis and Larry Lesser

Teens Talk

Macy Gluck, Rachelle Gomolsky and Riley Miner



Thanks to the generous support of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso, Temple Beth-El in Las Cruces will welcome our first-ever student rabbi in August. Sofia Zway is a fourth-year student at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's Los Angeles campus. She was born in Ecuador to South African parents, lived in Ecuador until she was eight, and then spent the rest of her growing-up years in South Africa.

Extensive experience

Before entering rabbinical school, Sofia earned an honors degree in Applied Drama and Theatre from the University of Cape Town and worked as a rabbinic intern at Temple Israel in Cape Town. She was an avid participant and volunteer at Limmud South Africa, the country's version of the global festival of Jewish learning.

She worked as a madricha (youth counselor) in Netzer South Africa,

the Reform Zionist Youth Movement (equivalent to NFTY) throughout high school and college. Sofia also spent a year studying and volunteering in Israel on Shnat Netzer, the youth movement's flagship ten-month leadership program. In 2013 she volunteered as the National Chairperson and head of camp for Netzer South Africa.

This past year, Sofia has been interning as a spiritual counselor at Beit T'shuvah, a residential addiction treatment center and congregation in Los Angeles, serving both Jewish and non-Jewish clients. After rabbinical school, she hopes to train as a doula (a professional support person focused on the needs of the family during pregnancy and childbirth), and is interested in incorporating birth work into her rabbinate.

Support from the community

Members of the TBE community are working to ensure that Sofia has a successful experience. Special gratitude

New Year, New Student Rabbi

goes to Cheryl Decker, Cherri Hudson-Brown, Stuart Kelter, Martha Roditti, Leora Zeitlin, and the Mitzvah Team.

For the past year, Temple Beth-El members have been discussing ways to ease the transition from a full-time rabbi to a student rabbi and organizing lay-led services to fill the gaps when Sofia isn't available; visiting rabbis may be used occasionally if needed.

Sofia's mentor notes that she will bring a thoughtful, energetic, and creative perspective to our bima and our members are excited about

attending services with her in person or by zoom.

Temple Beth-El is known as a small congregation with a big heart. In these uncertain times, our community is learning to adapt and although we're physically apart, we've become closer and gotten to know each other better.

We look forward to welcoming Sofia to our temple family!

*Joanne Turnbull, Ph.D.
Member, Board of Trustees
Chair, Transition Team
Temple Beth-El*

Schedule

The current plan for 2020-21 is for Sofia to officiate at High Holy Days services and be with our congregation for an additional 18 weekends from August through May. During her weekend visits, Sofia will lead services on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings,

and may also lead Torah study, provide Adult Education and teach or consult in the Religious School. If time allows, she may provide Bar/Bat Mitzvah training, meet with the youth group, supervise conversion study programs, provide counseling, and visit ill and aged members of our congregation.

Community Counts

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MAZEL TOV TO 2020 GRADUATES!

Dora Goldstein



Coronado High School

Plans: to attend University of Texas at Austin, on a pre-med track and business minor.

Parents: Karen Herman and Randy Goldstein

Siblings: Elan and Leor Goldstein

Grandparents: Tova and Peter Herman

"Hard work pays off, in school, sports and job. It's important to always be ready and give it your all because that's what makes a difference. I'm excited about my new journey that will lead me in the life I want to live. Hook 'em Horns!"

Sam Schwartz



Plans: Interested in printmaking, drawing, painting, graphic design, clothing design, and industrial design. Planned to attend Central Saint Martins in London studying fashion design this summer.

Parents: Tania and Scott Schwartz

Sibling: Max Schwartz

Grandparents: Susan and Mickey Schwartz

"By far the best investment you can make is in yourself."

Vanessa Chapman



University of Arizona, Eller School of Business

Plans: Work at Paradox Co., Scottsdale

Parents: Laura De la Rosa and Moshe Yardeni; William Chapman

"Be as involved in school as you can be, step out of your comfort zone and join as many clubs and meet new people. Those relationships will take you a long way. Always stay true to yourself and reach for the stars."

Dr. Shane Lipson



Paul L. Foster School of Medicine

Plans: Defer practicing medicine and continue running Mt. Franklin Insurance Agency

Spouse: Jeanne Lipson

Children: Marshall and Ross

Parents: Beth and Myer Lipson

Grandparents: Margie and Sonny Ospovat

"Medical school, like anything else you take seriously, is hard and time-consuming, but if you are doing something you enjoy, then it is always worth it. Choose endeavors that mean something to you and you will enjoy life."

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Rabbi Bery Schmukler

Silver lining under a dark cloud

We're all settling in to this new, hopefully soon-to-end reality.

The silver linings are obvious, we're all seeing our lives

through an entirely different lens. To borrow a phrase from time management, we're focusing more on the important things, and less on the urgent ones.

Things that heretofore defined our lives and what we did with our time each day, are at a complete standstill; those things we always knew we should

be doing but couldn't get around to are suddenly taking center stage. Many couples are finding renewal in relationships that were long stale, suddenly jolted back to life in this powerful moment of truth. Parents are looking into the eyes of their children, listening to them, talking to them.

People have reached out to let me know they **observed a Shabbat for the first time in their lives**, and that "it was the happiest day ever for the entire family," just being together without any distractions from the outside. Countless people are going back to lighting their Shabbat Candles and putting on their Tefillin regularly. People are taking out quality time – and more time – for sincere, heartfelt prayer, pouring out their hearts to their Creator, with

concern, love and gratitude.

People are exploring Torah texts, some for the first time in their lives, searching perhaps with a newfound curiosity as to what life is all about. Wow, who would think we'd ever witness such a spirit of renewal?

It's like we've been awakened from our dream of obsession with materialism and the rat race and with spending all of our time busying ourselves with things that don't really matter at the end of the day. **Our values seem to have been reset overnight!** It is refreshing in many ways.

My own prayers during these difficult and unprecedented days have been focused around a few things. I pray for complete healing for those who are ill, some gravely ill. I pray for

good health for the rest of us. **I pray for this pandemic to end quickly.**

I know this prayer is on all of our lips and hearts. I firmly believe G-d will answer it real soon; something will emerge that will allow the sunshine to shine through the clouds so that things can get back to normal, both in terms of health as well as the economy.

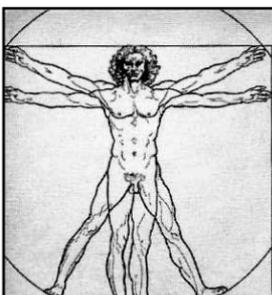
I also pray that we, the family of humanity, take along with us the life-changing lessons we've learned; **I pray we don't revert back to our old "normal" the moment things normalize.**

We've been sobered up and have matured greatly over the past couple months. I hope that after this challenge is over society will have changed for the good – for good...

Remember to wash your hands... and remember in whose hands you are!

Tracht Gut Vet Zein Gut: Think Good and It Will Be Good!

Rabbi Bery Schmukler
Chabad-Las Cruces

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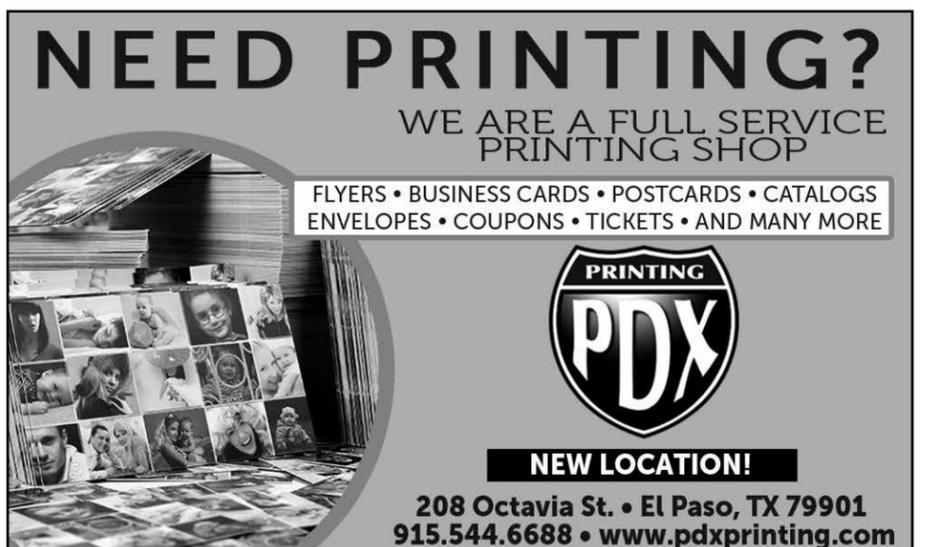
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*Suzie Gibson
Head of Administration
The Cherry Hill School*



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with Monika Kimball
President – Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

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Let's enjoy time "together" while staying safely apart.




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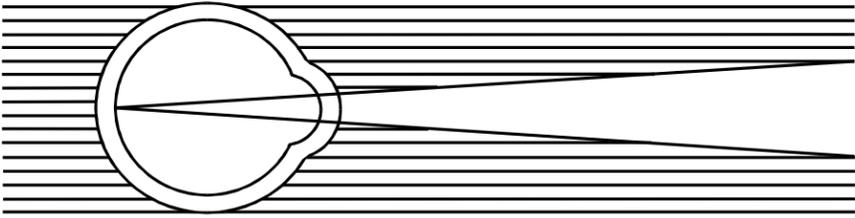
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