



## Women of inspiration

Na'amat honours four local women P4

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# Hamilton Jewish News

THE VOICE OF JEWISH HAMILTON

SEPTEMBER 2016 VOL 31:1/ TISHREI 5777

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## Compassion without borders



Photo by Wendy Schneider

Jackie and Becky Katz's work with Syrian refugee children this summer was bridge building in more ways than even they had anticipated. The above photograph, taken at James Street North's Centre 3 studio, captures the inspiring scene of the two young Jewish women and their Palestinian-born interpreter singularly focused on restoring normalcy to children whose young lives have been shaped by fear, violence and displacement. Read their story on page 18.

## No gift touches more lives

COMMUNITY NEEDS ARE GREATER THAN EVER BEFORE



Camp Kadimah camper Itamar Lawton with his counsellor Jack Douketis.

Photo by Wendy Schneider

by YVES APEL, Community Campaign Chair

I am no expert, but weather watchers tell us that this was the hottest August on record. As chair of the Annual Community Campaign for the third year in a row, I am also looking for a record. With our local economy getting better and real estate prices on the rise, I hope our donors are feeling more confident and will donate generously to keep our community vibrant.

Our challenges are real, but so is our ability to continue to provide for the vulnerable, educate our children, and enable a full and rich Jewish life in Hamilton, in Israel, and wherever else we are needed. Many things change, but supporting these community pillars: restoring hope to the vulnerable, awakening Jewish identity and strengthening Israel's promise – these things don't change.

Campaign leadership devises strategies and events to encourage giving, but in the end, it boils down to three main factors:

1. Do the donors have it in their hearts (and their wallets) to give this year?
2. Can we reach them all and have meaningful conversations about our entire community?
3. Can we continue to grow our valuable volunteer contingent to carry out the important work

of gathering community dollars into one pot, so that, come spring, we can once more begin to pass it on to our beneficiaries and community programs?

This year we are blessed once again to have the help of dozens of volunteer canvassers who, every year, make calls for months on end, returning to the same donors and asking them to pitch in; I am in awe of their commitment and hard work. They are hoping that you can increase your gift by at least five per cent this year, and that coming off a disappointing fundraising campaign last year, this community can benefit from a turnaround. On behalf of the Campaign Cabinet and the staff of the Hamilton Jewish Federation, thank you to the volunteers and donors, and may you be inscribed and sealed for a good year!



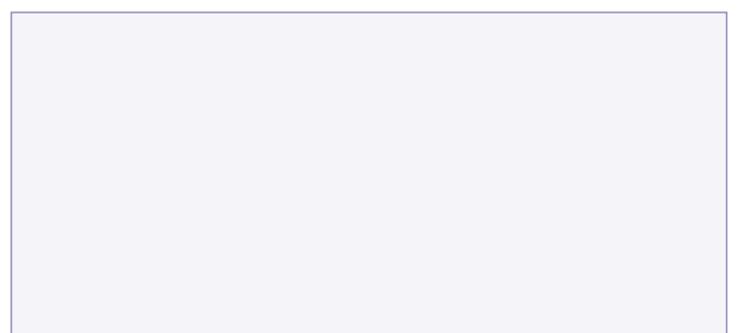
## Right of return

Hamilton was the final stop on an epic journey by 119 Jacob sheep that began in Abbotsford, B.C. and will end with their "baa-lyah" to Israel. The story of how Gil and Jenna Lewinsky shepherded the ancient breed across the country and persuaded two governments to set aside regulations by allowing for the unprecedented repatriation of the biblical sheep made international headlines this summer. The deal was brokered by Israel's ambassador to Canada, Rafael Barak, who stopped in to Hamilton along with Consul General of Israel in Toronto, Galit Baram, for a celebratory send off on Sept. 5. Story on page 6.



*On behalf of the Board and Staff of the Hamilton Jewish Federation we wish you a*

*Happy and Healthy New Year*



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(CIJA)



**A Cautionary tale: BDS tears apart the Green Party**

In early August, the Green Party of Canada voted at its national convention to endorse Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions (BDS) measures against segments of Israel's economy and society. BDS advocates were quick to claim victory, citing that the Greens are now the first Canadian political party of any significance to support BDS.

But not so fast.

In the wake of the vote, party leader Elizabeth May immediately declared she was "devastated" by the decision and "disappointed that the membership has adopted a policy in favor of a movement that I believe to be polarizing, ineffective, and unhelpful in the quest for peace and security for the peoples of the Middle East." May added that, "as is the right of any member, I will continue to express personal opposition to BDS" – a breath-taking statement to hear from a party leader, particularly when the leader is the party's sole voice in Parliament.

In the weeks that followed, May openly mused to the media about how this entire episode was causing her to rethink her future in the Green Party. In an interview with CBC Radio, May talked about the possibility of walking away from the party: "I would say as of this minute I think I'd have real difficulties going not just to an election but through the next month. There are a lot of issues I want to be talking about with Canadians, and this isn't one of them."

And May wasn't alone. The leader of the B.C. Green Party, Andrew Weaver, issued a scathing statement disavowing the federal party's decision. "This is not a policy that I nor the B.C. Green Party support," said Weaver. "I think the Green Party of Canada needs to take a careful look at their policy process and ask themselves how a policy that goes against Green Party values could have been allowed on the floor of a convention."

Various Green candidates likewise condemned the decision. One from Ottawa said "I'm in a state of disbelief ... I don't agree with it, I don't like having that over me going into (the next) election." Another from Halifax said that the policy is "destructive for the party ... Every country has its issues. When we specifically single out Israelis, I worry about the buzzwords and subtext and code language, which is anti-Semitic."

A party torn apart. A leader willing to quit. Controversial headlines eclipsing anything else the party intended to highlight coming out of convention. Is this what a BDS victory looks like?

The fight against BDS revolves around psychology much more than economics. Israel's economy is strong, with trade and ties growing despite calls for BDS. But on the psychological level, BDS activities have the potential to poison attitudes toward Israel among civil society organizations and demoralize the Jewish community. On both levels, BDS proponents failed when it comes to the Green Party.

While May has since declared she will stay on as leader, every Green voter should be outraged that BDS activists—in using the party to promote their own marginal agenda—nearly pushed the Greens' only voice in Parliament out of the party. If anything, this initiative has exposed the toxic nature of BDS to those it intended to seduce. As CIJA Chair David Cape recently wrote: "Once again, BDS has proven bitterly and publicly divisive for political parties that contemplate endorsing it. In this case, BDS has sown resentment among Greens and come at a great cost for anti-Israel activists."

And when it comes to the morale of the Jewish community, this issue has mobilized thousands of Jewish Canadians across the political spectrum (including former Green Party members) to speak out and condemn the party's hostility toward Israel. In a matter of weeks, CIJA galvanized some 7,500 Canadians to email the Green Party's leadership to express their opposition to this initiative. Without question, our united efforts had an impact, with Elizabeth May openly admitting BDS is "very clearly a polarizing movement that leaves most of the Jewish community in Canada feeling that it is anti-Semitic."

Hopefully, this will spur May and other Greens to take the steps needed to annul the BDS policy, and regain control of the party's direction from those behind this hateful agenda.



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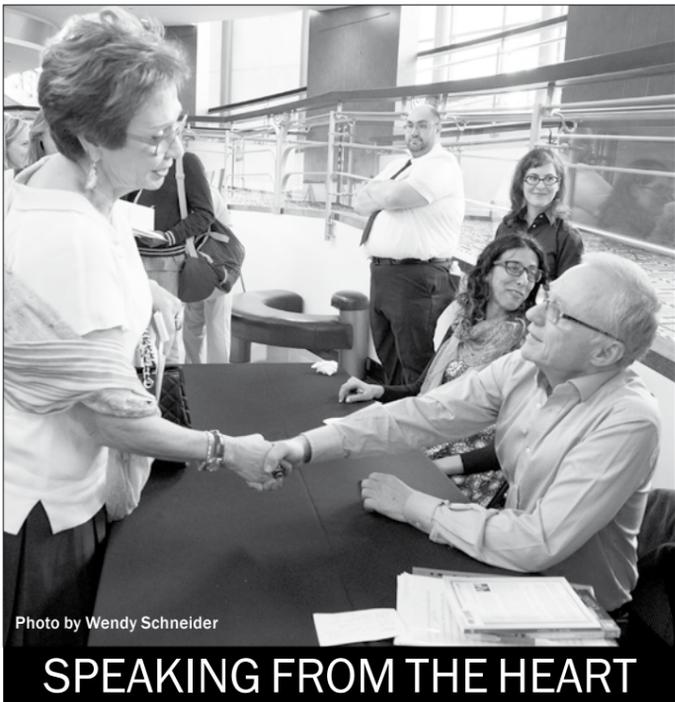


Photo by Wendy Schneider

### SPEAKING FROM THE HEART

Israeli author David Grossman, shown here at the Toronto Centre for the Arts, where he gave the keynote address at the New Israel Fund's annual Shira Herzog Symposium on Sept. 11. In the aftermath of his son's tragic death in the Second Lebanon War, Grossman said he found it hard to return to his writing, until the urge "to feel the pulse of life," through his novels' characters was reawakened in him. For Grossman, the act of writing is a way of overcoming despair "and the gravity of pain and sorrow," in life. "This is my way," he concluded, "to choose after all, life." An excerpt from Grossman's talk can be found online at [www.hamiltonjewishnews.com](http://www.hamiltonjewishnews.com).

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### COMING UP

#### CHANUKAH ISSUE

- Deadline for booking ad space Oct. 24, 2016
- Deadline for receiving editorial copy - Nov. 1, 2016
- Deadline for receiving ad copy Nov. 11, 2016
- Estimated date of arrival Dec. 9, 2016

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**Women of inspiration**

Na'amat honours four outstanding women at November event

by JULIA KOLLEK, Special to the Hamilton Jewish News

Brave, committed to helping others, creative teachers—and inspiring role models. Everyone is invited to celebrate four special women with these qualities who will be honoured at Na'amat's Women of Inspiration event, Sunday, Nov. 20. The evening will raise funds to provide educational scholarships for Israeli women to help lift them out of poverty.

**Celia Berlin Leon**

Celia Berlin Leon was ahead of her time when, in 1983, she founded Temple Playhouse. Two years earlier, Berlin Leon had moved from England to Hamilton and soon after, found herself a single parent, supporting her mother as well as her two small children.

Working several jobs, she rented space from Temple Anshe Sholom and single-handedly funded the preschool, while her mother (known to all as Nan) worked with her. Berlin Leon developed her unique and creative curriculum where children took turns on Fridays to be 'Abba' and 'Ima' as they welcomed Shabbat – along with a cultural education few thought to teach at pre-school level at that time. This included learning about Mozart, Einstein and famous artists.

Temple Playhouse has won several awards, including being voted one of the city's handpicked top three preschools and nominated repeatedly for the annual Hamilton Spectator Reader's Choice awards.

But if you ask Berlin Leon, probably the biggest reward is seeing generations of Temple Playhouse graduates bring their children back to Temple Playhouse. Her own daughter, Samantha, recently joined the Playhouse team full-time and her two teen daughters, Reese and Regan, regularly volunteer with their mother and grandmother.

**Batia Phillips**

Imagine being 18 and fighting with the Palmach. That's what happened to Batia Phillips. In 1945, Batia witnessed the British Navy as it ambushed concentration camp survivors in ramshackle boats, trying to reach Palestine.

Early one morning Phillips and her unit tried to meet up with the survivors at a secret landing spot to take them to safety, and although the British ambushed them, she and her fellow fighters managed to save 80 people.

Years later in Canada, Phillips took on a different kind of battle.



Na'amat women of inspiration, clockwise from top left: Joy Zians, Batia Phillips, Celia Berlin Leon and Sandy Morris. Photos courtesy of Na'amat Hamilton

Recently widowed, she founded a successful real estate firm, with the same energy and zest for life that she brings to her enthusiastic support for the arts—and her dedication to Na'amat.

**Sandy Morris**

How do you cope when you find yourself bringing up a special needs child and caring for an elderly parent?

For Sandy Morris the answer was to help others in the community. After caring for her dying mother, Sandy became a trained palliative caregiver at Shalom Village and she makes regular visits to comfort residents in their last days.

Morris also sits on the board of Beth Tikvah and on the community's newly-formed SNAP committee for families of children with developmental challenges—as well as helping at Beth Jacob synagogue, where she's a member.

The JNF office is on her volunteer list, and you may have heard Sandy's voice on the phone when she makes calls for Federation donations every year.

**Joy Zians**

Joy Zians is no ordinary Judaic pre-school teacher. Her young students at the Hamilton Hebrew Academy know that she'll dress up, sing and create stories as her special way to excite children about Judaism and get them learning. No surprise that she recently won the

school's Teacher Award.

But as her email moniker – joybzee – implies, Zian's day doesn't end with the afternoon school bell. When she's not preparing meals to give to those facing tough times, she's volunteering at Shalom Village, Beth Tikvah (where she and Morris met) Federation's SNAP committee - and helping with the food bank at Jewish Social Services.

Every Friday, Zians takes time to check in with shabbat shalom phone wishes to people glad to hear her cheerful voice, and almost every night she supervises women at the Mikvah.

Zians is also part of the Chevra Kadisha, preparing bodies for burial, a very difficult task that most people wouldn't be able to do.

Join Na'amat as we honour these four inspiring women—and at the same time help to change the lives of women in Israel.

**Need to know**

**What:** Na'amat's Women of Inspiration  
**When:** Sunday, Nov 20, 2016 at 7 p.m.  
**Refreshments:** Hors d'oeuvres and desserts  
**Where:** Beth Jacob Synagogue, Hamilton  
**Tickets:** \$25 online at www.naamat.com/hamilton or email hamilton.info@naamat.com

**FACING THE SEA  
 ART EXHIBIT AND SALE**

The O-MA-NOOT Gallery at Beth Jacob Synagogue presents the **Facing the Sea Art Project**, a collaborative project led by Israeli artist and illustrator Einat Peled featuring their drawings and sketches of the beaches of Greater Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv used to be known as the city that turned its back on the sea, but in recent years its beaches have become more and more integral to the character of the city. The opening reception for the Facing the Sea exhibit will take place on Sunday, Oct. 16 at 11:30 a.m. For more information call 905.522.1351.



# AGH hosts Canadian premiere of multi-media exhibit on the Holocaust

Photographer Yuri Dojc documents his return to his family's former home in Slovakia

by JANET MOWAT, The Art Gallery of Hamilton

The Art Gallery of Hamilton is very proud to present *Last Folio*, a multi-media exhibition of photography and film that tells the story of the Holocaust in a small village in Slovakia. The exhibition opens Oct. 22, 2016 and will remain on view until May, 2017.

Time had stood still since 1943 in Bardejov, Slovakia, until nearly 10 years ago when Canadian photographer Yuri Dojc returned to visit his family's former home. On the eve of World War II, many of the villagers had fled, and those remaining were taken away to concentration camps.

Serendipity led Dojc, along with a documentary film team to the local Jewish school, which had been locked since 1943. All the schoolbooks were still there; including essay notebooks with corrections—even the sugar was still in the cupboard. The decaying books, which were lying on

dusty shelves, the last witnesses of a once thriving culture, are treated by Dojc like the survivors they are—each one captured as a portrait, preserved in their final beauty, silent witnesses to the horrors of history.

"Last Folio is a moving photographic journey of memory and loss," said Shelley Falconer, president and CEO of the Art Gallery of Hamilton. "The AGH is deeply honoured to be the first Canadian institution to exhibit together the complete series and film."

The exhibition includes more than 30 photographs of objects and interiors, portraits of Holocaust survivors and a documentary film of Dojc's artistic journey by international film, television producer and writer, Katya Krausova. A 20-minute edited version of the feature film shot during his numerous trips to Slovakia is included in the exhibition.



Yuri Dojc Book, Bardejov, 2007 chromogenic print

Photo courtesy of the Art Gallery of Hamilton

Together with the survivor portraits they create a greater context from which to view the photographs.

"The images in Last Folio are a last memento of the culture and people who used those books," said Yuri Dojc. "Most of them are forgotten—they don't have relatives or graves. I tried to memorialize them. This is not a documentary but my personal salute to a vanished culture and a vanished people. These images absorb me totally. They represent more than what I saw that first day."

## LAST FOLIO OPENING PROGRAMMING

■ **Thursday, Oct. 20, 7:00 p.m.**

Screening of *Last Folio*, the documentary film in the Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Pavilion, 123 King Street West, Hamilton. If there is enough demand there will be another screening at 9:00 p.m.

■ **Sunday, Oct. 23, 3:00 p.m.**

Official Opening of *Last Folio* exhibition. Artists in attendance. Free admission.

■ **Thursday, Oct. 27 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**

Artist talk and tour with Yuri Dojc  
Free admission.

■ More information [artgalleryofhamilton.com](http://artgalleryofhamilton.com)

**Admission:** AGH Members: Free; Adults, \$10; Students/Seniors, \$8; Children (6-17), \$4; under 5 years, Free. Friday Free Night: Free admission on the first Friday of the month. Gallery Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.; Thursday, 11 a.m.–8 p.m.; Friday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.; Saturday–Sunday, 12 noon–5 p.m.

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# Right of return

Israel-bound Jacob sheep spent a month in the Hamilton area this summer

Story and photo by WENDY SCHNEIDER  
the Hamilton Jewish News



Jenna and Gil Lewinsky were overwhelmed by the positive welcome they found in Hamilton this summer.

Hamilton is the final stop on an epic journey undertaken by a Canadian Israeli and his South African born wife, who are making Aliyah together with their flock of 119 Jacob sheep.

The journey began two years ago when Gil and Jenna Lewinsky, then living in Abbotsford, B.C., serendipitously came into the possession of four Jacob sheep, whose origins date back to biblical times. Jacob sheep are characterized by their unusual colouring – white with black or brown coloured patches, their goat-like appearance based on the fact that both sexes are horned and have black knee bands. The ancient breed acquired its name from a story in the book of Genesis in which our forefather Jacob acquired the “spotted and speckled” sheep as wages from his father-in-law, Laban. Their history mirrors the history of the Jewish people, who were exiled from their homeland during the Babylonian exile and scattered among the nations of the earth. The UK based Jacob Sheep Society has the descendants of the original Jacob sheep being brought from the Middle East by the Moors into Spain. From there they were imported into Elizabethan England as an ornament to country house parks. Eventually, some were imported into North America.

Of the remaining couple of thousand pure bred Jacob sheep in the world, none are to be found in Israel. Once the Lewinskys understood the significance of their newly acquired sheep, they were determined to change that.

David Ben Gurion once said that in Israel, in order to be a realist you must believe in miracles. The Lewinskys are not religious in the traditional sense, but both Gil and Jenna see their success at rescuing more than a hundred Jacob sheep from certain slaughter, at finding facilities for their growing flock, at finding funding to keep them going and overcoming seemingly insurmountable bureaucratic obstacles in mystical terms. “You will not understand how things happened with these sheep if you do not have faith in God because of the miracles that have taken place,” said Gil.

Miracles, for instance, like the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development doing a complete turnaround after first refusing the sheep entry into the country due to there being no livestock import agreement between Canada and Israel. But last May the Canadian government’s Food Inspection Agency and the Israel Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development decided that, on a one-time basis, they’d allow the

“It’s the Zionist dream. The sheep, like the Jewish people, are returning home.”

Gil Lewinsky

importation of live sheep to Israel, a change of stance most likely brought about by the influence of Israel’s ambassador to Canada Rafael Barak, who has said that it’s his own personal mission to see the Jacob Sheep repatriated to Israel.

“We’re opening up future Israel Canadian trade,” said Gil optimistically, saying he can envision a time when herds of cattle, sheep, horses regularly go between Canada and Israel.

As word began spreading in Israel about the sheep’s upcoming “baal-iyah” more miracles came their way. El Al, Israel’s national airline, offered to charter a specially outfitted flight to transport the animals and pay 90 per cent of the cost; and the Mayor of Katzrin in the Golan Heights offered the Lewinskys a tract of land in the Golan Heights for a future heritage park in which the sheep will be a major tourist attraction.

How the Lewinskys came to spend their last days in Canada here in the Hamilton area is yet another example of serendipity at play. The story begins two months ago when they were contacted by former Hamiltonian and current resident of Vancouver Island, Elizabeth Gelb (known to many in this area as Liz Randor.)

“She called us out of the blue when she saw our story online,” said Jenna. “So she came to see the sheep. She was so impressed by

what she saw that she became our donor relations person.”

When Gelb heard that the Lewinskys were searching for a facility to rent in Southern Ontario for the four-week quarantine period leading up to their departure, she asked her friend, local dairy farmer David Loewith, if he knew of anything in the area. When his efforts turned up nothing, the Lewinskys ended up finding a facility on Kijiji, that turned out to be located just a few short kilometres from the Loewith farm. The Loewiths immediately extended an invitation to the Lewinskys to spend the next month living on their property, rather than at a motel in Burlington, which was their initial plan.

Jacob Sheep are known for their curiosity and intelligence, as well as the heart-opening effect they have on the people who meet them.

As the only animals ever to be granted the right of return by the Israeli government, they’re bound to have the same effect in their new country.

“It’s the Zionist dream,” said Gil, “the sheep, like the Jewish people, are returning home.”

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# COMMUNITY is restoring hope to the vulnerable

Between 13 and 18 per cent of Jewish Hamiltonians have special needs. With inclusivity as our primary goal, Federation created its Special Needs Action Committee (SNAP), which aims to level the playing field by providing support programs which enable persons with disabilities of all ages to participate in educational, social and recreational programs. This year, SNAP subsidies enabled several students to be fully included and attend the program their parents chose for them. David (not his real name) was able to access a psycho-educational assessment which identified his special needs and provided the teachers with the tools needed to modify his program. An educational assistant made it possible for Jacob to stay focused and in his after school Hebrew program. SNAP-facilitated programs for parents and professionals provided information, strategies and links to community resources related to the special needs population. With your generous support of the Annual Community Campaign, Federation's SNAP program can continue to make sure that every Jewish Hamiltonian feels included.

It's time: Donate. Volunteer. Get involved.



Please give generously to the 2016 Community Campaign.

Donate online at [www.jewishhamilton.org](http://www.jewishhamilton.org), your gateway to everything Jewish in Hamilton.

## Dundas couple establish fund in support of chronic pain treatment



Jeff and Gilda Ennis

Photo by Wendy Schneider

by JULIA KOLLEK, Special to the Hamilton Jewish News

Life is no fun if you're in constant pain. Dr. Jeff Ennis knows this first-hand. He's suffered from chronic pain most of his life but has found ways to lead a full and active life. For the past 20 years, he's dedicated his career to helping other sufferers do the same.

Medical treatment is imperfect, so Jeff founded The Ennis Centre for Pain Management where he and his team (together with his wife Gilda, a physiotherapist) run a unique program that integrates cognitive behavioural therapy through all the treatments offered.

But as pain specialists in the area retire, none are taking their place.

So Jeff and Gilda decided to do something about it.

"Back in medical school, I got a scholarship to go to a week-long pain management seminar. I've never forgotten how important that scholarship was," said Jeff, "and I want the next generation of pain management specialists to have the same opportunity."

Jeff and Gilda created an endowment fund at McMaster University that offers financial support to medical students interested in chronic pain management, enabling them to attend extracurricular courses and conferences.

"Studying medicine is a long-term commitment," said Gilda. "By the

time they're interns, some medical students are married with young families and their finances are stretched."

The couple want to make sure future chronic pain sufferers will continue to get the best treatment and be under the care of the next generation of specialists.

A GoFundMe campaign will launch in the fall and the couple is offering to match any donation dollar for dollar. If you'd like to make a donation, visit [www.givetomcmaster.ca](http://www.givetomcmaster.ca) and enter Ennis Pain Management Endowment Fund as the fund of your choice.

## Remembering Frank Simkevitz

by SUZY POLGAR, Special to the Hamilton Jewish News

Franklin Simkevitz was a well-known name and face in the City of Hamilton as well as the Jewish communities of Regional Ontario for many years. As a consummate community professional, Frank served the Hamilton Jewish community with dedication and passion both during his tenure as the Director of the Hamilton Jewish Federation's Legacy Endowment Fund and as executive director of the Jewish National Fund – Regional Ontario. Frank was also a devoted volunteer at the Beth Tikvah Foundation where he served as chair of its board of directors for many years.



Franklin D. Simkevitz

Photo by Wendy Schneider

His good friend, Stan Tick, said, "I first met Frank when he applied for the job of director for the Legacy Endowment Fund. I was the chair of the search committee and he really caught our attention as being a sincere, hardworking man. Having volunteered with the Reena Foundation in Toronto, he wanted to be engaged in volunteer work in Hamilton as well as being a professional here. He became involved with Beth Tikvah Foundation, bringing his knowledge, expertise and concern for the marginalized community from Reena to Beth Tikvah."

Frank was passionate about Israel and the Jewish National Fund, reaching out and visiting the smaller communities throughout Ontario, from Kingston to Windsor, from Niagara Falls to Thunder Bay, ensuring they maintained a strong relationship with the State of Israel. He worked tirelessly and seemingly effortlessly as he travelled around, educating people about the work of JNF. Frank visited Jewish and non-Jewish communities, Rotary Clubs and more, encouraging people to visit Israel and see first-hand the wonderful work of JNF and how Israel is so different than how it is portrayed in the media. He himself took scores of people on missions to Israel with JNF and saw people fall as in love with the country as he was.

"Frank was esteemed by his co-workers and was considered to be my right hand man. I could always go to Frank for insight and heart felt advice," said CEO of JNF Canada, Josh Cooper. He worked in partnership with the Presidents and Boards of Directors of his region. He was kind and fair to his staff, always ensuring them that their lives and their families came first. Frank was a leader, a mentor to many, a mensch to all, and a true friend to all who knew him.

Frank leaves behind his beloved wife, Elaine, and his mother Eleanor, to whom he was very devoted. He was the loving father and father-in-law of Howard Simkevitz and Laura Fisch, and Steven Simkevitz and Lihor Abraham-Simkevitz, dear brother and brother-in-law of Judy and Paul Kupferstein and devoted grandfather of Zoe, Eden, Margot and Jonah..

The JNF will be establishing the Franklin D. Simkevitz Memorial Fund to which people can donate. Please call our office at 905-527-5516 for more information.

*Former JNF Regional Ontario executive director Frank Simkevitz died at the age of 70 on August 5, 2016 of cancer. Suzy Polgar is the organization's new executive director.*

## Suzy Polgar steps up to lead JNF team

Story and photo by Wendy Schneider, the Hamilton Jewish News



Suzy Polgar, (standing, top left) with her team, Roberta Katz (centre back row), Geraldine Katz-Rose (right, standing) and Claire Gajdo.

Photo by Wendy Schneider

Suzy Polgar steps into the position of executive director at JNF Ontario Region with a heavy heart, following the untimely death of the late Frank Simkevitz. Hired by Simkevitz in January 2012 as JNF Hamilton's outreach and education director, Polgar is now responsible for overseeing JNF fundraising activities in Hamilton, London and Windsor.

Born and raised in Toronto, Polgar lived on a kibbutz in Israel for a number of years before returning to Canada to pursue a degree in teaching English as a second language. She and her husband live in Oakville and have three grown children.

Working full time in the Jewish community had always been a dream of Polgar's, a dream that was fulfilled the day she began working at JNF.

The JNF Hamilton team includes administrative assistant, Claire Gajdo, in charge of outreach, program and education director, Geraldine Katz-Rose, and manager and bookkeeper Roberta Katz.

"I could not do this job without them," she said. "They're so absolutely incredibly supportive. They knew I could do the job before I knew I could do it."

The Hamilton Chapter wishes all our donors, families and friends a very Healthy and Happy New Year



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# C MMUNITY is awakening Jewish identity

Living an engaged Jewish life can be expensive. There are dues for synagogue membership, fees for preschool, and tuition for supplementary and day schools. Those who want to enrich their child's education with overnight camp and trips to Israel absorb even higher costs.

Federation's mandate to support and facilitate a culturally vibrant Jewish community in Greater Hamilton is achieved through our beneficiary agencies that include our day schools, supplementary schools and the JCC's Camp Kadimah. With Federation's help families are getting the access they deserve to a vibrant Jewish life — ensuring a future in which Jewish identity is central to the lives of all Jews, regardless of financial ability. With your generous support our community partners can continue to provide the programs that strengthen and nurture Jewish identity and are essential in maintaining our community's growth.

It's time: Donate. Volunteer. Get involved.



Please give generously to the 2016/17 Annual Campaign.

Donate online at [www.jewishhamilton.org](http://www.jewishhamilton.org), your gateway to everything Jewish in Hamilton.

# From Hamilton to Boston



Ben Shragge

The ambitious young Hamiltonian dreams of Toronto: its cult of failed sports teams, its Babel-like glass condos, its crowds of anonymous diversity. Here, she thinks, I will find the job, the friends, the lifestyle I deserve. And never again will I be run off the sidewalk by a scooter speeding to a money mart.

Hamilton's authentic character, growing arts scene, and relative affordability are attracting migrants from Toronto and elsewhere, which is changing residents' perception of their city. Still, the phenomenon of the self-hating Hamiltonian, ashamed of the smokestacks and sidewalk-speeding scooters, is likely to persist. Toronto will remain big and cosmopolitan, Hamilton will remain small and provincial, and glass condos reaching up to Heaven will continue to attract the upwardly mobile, as they ever have.

I'm from Hamilton, and you have to embrace where you're from. Home is where the memories are. It's the Eden in your Genesis story. It's where your dreams take you back to, no matter where you wake up. When I think of Hamilton, I don't think of steel mills or payday loan billboards. I think of family outings to Dundas Driving Park and Confederation Park; driving down the Mountain at night,

seeing the city lights; and browsing the shelves while eating free popcorn at Jumbo Video in Dundurn Plaza – the finest plaza there ever was and ever will be. To reject all that would be to reject a part of my soul, which would be a hopeless exercise in self-defeat. Plus, it's more fun to root for the underdog, and Hamilton, with its Sisyphean quest for an NHL team, is Underdog City.

That being said, I once resigned myself to moving to Toronto, since that's where the jobs are in my industry (and many industries). I didn't actively aspire to live the Toronto dream—renting a condo in a building built yesterday, trading Tim Hortons for Starbucks, and pretending the Maple Leafs had a chance at the playoffs – but for young people beginning their career, the CN Tower's magnetic pull is difficult to resist. That I ultimately ended up in Boston instead was more by chance than design, but I've felt at home here in part for its similarities to Hamilton.

Like Hamilton, Boston has a strong working-class identity, and is the butt of unfunny jokes for that reason. Also like Hamilton, Boston has a ubiquitous local donut franchise (Dunkin'), a civic spirit that crosses class divides, a key geographic landmark (a river, not a mountain), and a unifying team loyalty/enmity. Red Sox vs. Yankees stirs as much passion here as Tiger-Cats vs. Argos does in the Tim Hortons lineups of Hamilton. More broadly, New York is to Boston what Toronto is to Hamilton: an overbearing, self-centered sibling rival with a

size advantage.

Of course, Boston has some advantages that Hamilton doesn't have: a revolutionary history, a clean harbour, islands (though not waterfalls), an actual international airport, an NHL team, LRT. But it's not too late for Hamilton to catch up in at least a couple of these areas (including, depending on how far left the NDP goes, revolutionary history). After all, Boston hasn't always been a model of civic virtue: until a cleanup in the 1990s, its now-beautiful Spectacle Island was literally used as a dump. With visionary leadership, Hamilton too could clean up its dumps, both literal (Randle Reef) and metaphorical (Jackson Square).

Unfortunately, no one in Boston has heard of Hamilton, so around here I'm forced to say I'm from "the Greater Toronto area." But as a proud Hamilton native raised in the faith of the prophets, I believe with messianic fervor that one day, may it be soon, Hamilton's harbour will be safe for swimming, its downtown businesses will attract more crowds than its methadone clinics, and Torontonians will be the ones forced to say they're from the Greater Hamilton area. And, on that same day when the lion lies down with the lamb and the nations beat their swords into ploughshares, the Boston Bruins will play a Hamilton NHL team in Coppins Coliseum restored.

*Ben Shragge is the digital editor of the Hamilton Jewish News*

# The broken heart



Ralph Benmergui

As we enter in to the High Holiday season I would like to bum you out. Take the low road as it were. Now I'm not doing this just to be cruel and I certainly know that our Day of Atonement is fraught as it is but I encourage you to take the plunge with me if only this once. Let's start with the Vidui—the prayer that we recite standing up as taking our fisted hand to our hearts. With each line of the Vidui we give our hearts a knock. They say that God can only be found through the cracks we make as we land each blow. Through the broken heart. Told you this would be a bummer. We abuse, we betray, we are cruel. We destroy, we embitter, we falsify. We gossip, we hate, we insult. We jeer, we kill, we lie. We mock, we neglect, we oppress. We pervert, we quarrel, we rebel. We steal, we transgress, we are unkind. We are violent, we are wicked, we are xenophobic. We yield to evil, we are zealots for bad causes.

To help us see the Vidui in a livable context, as an inventory of our weaknesses, and not just an indictment of our characters I turn to one of my favourite Chasidic Rebbes. Reb Nachman of Bratslav: "A broken heart and sadness (atzvut) are not the same at all. Sadness is expressed in anger and irritability, whereas broken-heartedness... (well) it would be best for us to experience such

a broken heart all day long." like a child desperately missing their parents. "Reb Nachman goes on to say that doing so, staying broken-hearted would however inevitably leave us in that angry irritable place of sadness, so he suggests instead that we set aside some period during the day to pray with a broken heart while the rest of the day is spent in joy. Imagine not that we are filled with guilt and grief that permeates our lives, but that instead we create a space in our contemplative selves in which we can spend some time with our heartbreak.

The heartbreak of our shortcomings, of what we do that does not repair, but instead damages our world. 'We are human, we gossip, we quarrel, we lie, we are xenophobic, we are zealots for bad causes.' (for the full list, see above) Perhaps as we enter this sweet time of reflection and forgiveness of ourselves and others we can turn to our inner rabbis. Not look for dispensation from the bimah but instead find our humility. Humility is not about a sheepish affect of smallness but instead about finding the appropriate positioning in any given situation. Sometimes the right thing to do is lead, other times to support, no two scenarios are the same. A Vidui is not about our unworthiness but our humanity. Perhaps as we make a space for our darkness we can look for the cracks as Rebbe Leonard Cohen says, "That's where the light gets in."

*Ralph Benmergui is an ordained spiritual director and a newcomer to Hamilton.*

YOUR NAME HERE

## YISKOR

**On Yom Kippur we say Yizkor. It is traditional to make a charitable donation in memory of our loved ones. This year's JNF Yizkor Campaign will help support a youth center in the Negev town of Halutza, Israel.**

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**the pulse of Jewish teenage life in the greater Hamilton area.**

Explore New Dimensions.

### Meet Our New Director!

Newly appointed Director David Ehrentreu is a dynamic Jewish educator who takes pride in inspiring Jewish youth of all denominations. He is excited to bring his talents to Hamilton Hebrew High, where he aims to rejuvenate the current Jewish Teen youth scene by introducing a number of multi-faceted programs.

David sees opportunity to expand school growth by engaging unaffiliated youth in the Hamilton-Wentworth area. In addition to formal academic learning, initiatives planned for this year include:

- An expansion of the "Live to Give" program that will see students collaborate on various projects to benefit the community.
- Development of a social network between local Jewish students from diverse backgrounds.
- Partnering with prestigious Jewish organizations to effect positive change.

A Toronto native, David has recently moved to Hamilton with his wife Hindy, and their son Naftali. David enjoys playing guitar and a good cup of Joe.

Hamilton Hebrew High is an after school for-credit Jewish Studies program for public high school students in grades 9-12. (Grade 8 students can take advantage of a grade 9 course through the Reach Ahead Program.)

for more information visit [www.hcubed.ca](http://www.hcubed.ca)

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Wednesdays @ 5:00pm - 7:30pm  
Open to Grade 11 & 12 Students

To Register Visit [www.hcubed.ca](http://www.hcubed.ca) or call our Director, David Ehrentreu at (647) 785-4100



# COMMUNITY is strengthening Israel's promise

Over the last year, more than 2,000 French Jews made aliyah to Israel, with the help of Federation's overseas partner, the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI). Dan Azoulay is an organizational psychologist from the city of Lyon in France, who speaks Hebrew well and sees himself fitting in to Israel as a psychologist. He and his wife, Laura, who also works in the field of corporate psychology, are among those building a new life in Israel. "We wanted our children to grow up in a Jewish society as we, their parents, succeed in our work and are absorbed into Israeli society," said Dan.

Jewish Federations of Canada-UIA's Friends Across the Sea program promotes global Jewish identity and unity through people-to-people connections between Canadian and Galilee Panhandle residents. The Grade 5 students pictured above are from Hamaginim elementary school in Kiryat Shmona. As part of their curriculum, they discuss where Jews live around the world, what's important to them and how they practice their Judaism. Front and centre is David (not his real name), a charismatic 12-year old, who has the voice of a rock star and wants to be an entertainer.

Your contribution to the Annual Community Campaign strengthens Israel's promise and helps Jews everywhere make their dreams a reality.

**It's time: Donate. Volunteer. Get involved.**



**Please give generously to the 2016/17 Annual Campaign.  
Donate online at [www.jewishhamilton.org](http://www.jewishhamilton.org), your gateway to everything Jewish in Hamilton.**

# THE BEST OF

Jewish Hamilton is filled with hidden treasures — groups of individuals who find in each other’s company a sense of community and purpose. The B’nai Brith mixed bowling league is one of them.

Story and photo by WENDY SCHNEIDER  
the Hamilton Jewish News



## The B’nai Brith Mixed Bowling League

# JEWISH HAMILTON

### How it started

As Manny Fine tells it, the mixed league came about as a compromise. The year was 1990, and B’nai Brith Canada had just voted to merge with its sister organization B’nai Brith Women. Manny, who was then president of B’nai Brith International, was confident he could persuade the 70-strong members of the Hamilton men’s league to open its membership to women. He was wrong. “So here I am, president of the international association and I can’t control my own league,” he said. As Hamilton already had an existing B’nai Brith women’s bowling league, Manny proposed that a mixed bowling league be formed. “And that’s what we did.” Over time, the mixed league became the city’s dominant league.

### Who’s who

At 87 and 85, Manny and Ruth Fine are the league’s elders. Balance issues made it necessary for Manny to stop bowling a few years back, but Ruth played regularly right up until last year. Thirty-something Jordan Guest is the league’s youngest member. Ernie Mason, who looks much younger than his 82 years, has been bowling since the early 1960s. “I’ve got a bad shoulder a bad back,” he said, “but I bring my wife, Dottie, because if she doesn’t bowl she doesn’t do anything physical. From that point of view it’s terrific. And there’s not that many activities in Hamilton that really takes place in the Jewish community.”

Vera Chaimovitz has been coming out for about 20 years. Her late husband, Mike, served a term as president.

“If you’d told me in my younger years that I’d join bowling I’d say you were out of your mind,” she said. Following her husband’s death, she stayed involved, even serving a term as president. “Bowling is a great social atmosphere,” she said.

Vera’s brother-in-law and current president, Moishe Chaimovitz joined the league with his wife Dorina a year after Vera and Mike. “Mike and I bowled (with the men’s league) on Wednesday nights,” he recalled. “Then we decided we’d rather spend the evening with our wives on Monday nights.” If a prize were ever to be given to the hardest working member of the league, Ray Greenspon would win hands down. The league secretary since its inception, he’s responsible for keeping members informed about score results and allocating prize money, a task much more complex than would at first appear.

### Sharing the wealth

“One of the things we do right in this league is that we try to share the wealth,” said Ray. “We don’t want one person walking away with big money in prizes because they’re a great bowler while a less capable bowler walks away with nothing.” The prize money comes from a pool of funds accumulated from a portion of the \$25 fee members are charged to play every week. Ray and Manny came up with a formula where winning players are only able to walk away with the most valuable prize they qualify for, conceding any additional prizes to the next qualifier. “So we’ll give you that prize and you will defer the other one so we can split the prizes amongst as many people as we can,” said Ray. “It ends up

that most of bowlers in the league win something ... That’s kept people much more interested.”

### Love story

“If it hadn’t been for bowling we wouldn’t be together.” That’s Lou Rottman, explaining how he and his wife Rhona met and became friends through bowling. Their first date took place about a year after they met when Rhona asked Lou to go with her to a friend’s birthday party. They tied the knot in 1992.

### Resident guru

Brian Kremer is the league’s resident guru. “He knows the game and he knows how to teach the game,” said Moishe Chaimovitz. Kremer has been bowling since the age of 18 when he bowled five-pin with the Grand Order of Israel. He graduated to 10-pin when he started working for Stelco in 1962. Because he worked shifts he didn’t start bowling with B’nai Brith until 1988. Kremer likes to tell people right away if he sees them doing something wrong. Like what, for instance? “They’re trying to throw the ball. Once the ball leaves your hand you have no control over it,” he said, “so the idea is to bring your hand over the foul line and release the ball out in front. In bowling you have to deliver the ball.”

### The banquets

There are some legends that never die—like the end-of-year banquets that used to take place at the elegant Dundas home of Sondi and the late Barbara Goldblatt. “We had the best time doing it,” said Sondi, a youthful 78. “It was like

yontiff all over again.” What did she serve? “You only wish you were there,” said Moishe Chaimovitz, laughing. “The guys didn’t eat anything the whole day before going over there.”

### A family

“This is a group of people that call or send a card when somebody is not well,” said Moishe. “If something happens to somebody, the support is magnificent.”

“The bottom line,” said Vera, “is that everybody helps everybody out. If you’re having a bad night, there’s always somebody there to let you know that you’re doing ok.”

### Everyone welcome

The league meets every Monday night at the Burlington Bowl at 4065 Harvester Rd. and new members would be most welcome.

“It’s a beautiful way to spend the night,” said Moishe. “We used to have baseball. That died,” said Moishe. “We had the women’s league and that died. There’s a couple of very active mah-jong groups but other than that you have nothing. This is the last existing evening for a mixed group.”

“The bottom line,” said Vera, “is the fact that even though there’s a disparity of ages ... you don’t feel the age spread. And that’s really, really nice.”

For more information about the B’nai Brith mixed bowling league, contact Moishe Chaimovitz by email at [mchaimovitz@cogeco.ca](mailto:mchaimovitz@cogeco.ca) or call 905-516-5599.

*Wishing you a healthy and a happy new year*

*From our family to yours.*



# THE HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION

# WE ARE COMMUNITY



Through our collaborative community planning process and our Annual Campaign, the Federation raises and allocates funds to provide life-saving, life-changing and life-enhancing experiences for Jews in Hamilton and around the globe.



PRESERVING AND STRENGTHENING THE  
QUALITY OF JEWISH LIFE IN GREATER HAMILTON,  
ISRAEL AND AROUND THE WORLD

# Immigrant stories

What brought you to Hamilton? That's the question at the heart of a new series that highlights the stories of newcomers to our community in advance of an upcoming exhibit on the same topic at Beth Jacob's Rosenshein museum. Over the next four issues, the HJN asks some of these individuals and families why they left their places of birth, why they chose Hamilton, what challenges they faced, and what they most appreciate about living in Canada. These are their stories.

Story and photos by WENDY SCHNEIDER, the Hamilton Jewish News

## DIANA AND LEON KARAN

**IMMIGRATED FROM: BELARUS**  
**ARRIVED IN HAMILTON: NOVEMBER 1991**



**WATCH:** Diana Karan speaks about the circumstances around her family's departure from Belarus. Visit [www.hamiltonjewishnews.com](http://www.hamiltonjewishnews.com)

**Who came:** Leon and Diana Karan, their daughter Ilona, 16, son Steve 11, and Leon's elderly father, Guessel.

**Why they left:** Diana and Leon Karan were the last members of their extended family to get out of the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Diana said that for years she was in a constant state of fear after an incident in which a man followed her daughter from school, picked up the young child and said "Oh, you're a Jewish girl." Being refused permission to accompany her high school students on a class trip to Paris for trumped up reasons was the final straw.

**Obstacles:** There was nothing straightforward about the Karans departure beginning with the day Canadian embassy officials informed Leon that the family's immigration application had been accepted, but his father, who was not a blood relative of the sponsor, Diana's aunt, would have to remain behind. "I'm not leaving my 80-year-old father alone. He has nobody here," Leon told the consul general after refusing to leave the building until he'd had a chance to make his case. "He said, 'You're the first one who refused to leave his parents behind. I'll see what I can do.'" So Leon came back the next

day and his father got a minister's permit to come," said Diana.

**Standout memory:** Being served strawberries and bananas. "In November!" she said. "something that we never saw in Belarus." The warm welcome the family received from Hamilton Jewish Social Services director, Carol Krames made a lasting impression. "She welcomed us with open arms. Her help was just unforgettable," said Diana, "and this is why we're trying to give back to the community because we always remember the help we received."

**Successes:** Diana heads the ESL department at Columbia International College. Leon, an award winning music educator, studio owner and a sessional instructor at McMaster University, is a devoted volunteer at Jewish Social Services, where he conducts the Chai Choir. Ilona sings with the Canadian Opera Company and Steve is vice president of logistics at Bell Mobility.

**What Canada means to her:** "It means to have my family safe. It means that my children could achieve what they have achieved," said Diana. Every Canada Day, she gets a phone call from her son Steve. "Thank you," he tells them, "for bringing me here."

## NADINE AND DAVID KOFF

**IMMIGRATED FROM: PARIS, FRANCE**  
**ARRIVED IN HAMILTON: 2008**



**Who came:** Radiologists Nadine and David Koff and their three sons moved to Toronto in 1998 when the couple accepted fellowships at that city's University Health Network.

**Why they left:** According to David, the couple's primary reason for coming to Canada was to find venture capital for a business the couple envisioned creating that would allow doctors to send xray results over the Internet, then in its early days. Nadine, however, had other reasons for coming. "I was really afraid of the rise of the far right and anti-Semitism," she said, recalling an incident at her son's school in which a professor told Jewish students if they didn't work harder, they'd be sent back to the gas chambers. "It was really shocking," she said, "and what was more shocking is that the director of the school didn't do a thing. She just said, 'Anyway Jews are cowards so the parents won't complain.'" David, whose Eastern European parents immigrated to France before the Second World War, explained that France's Ashkenazi community has always kept a low profile. Growing up, he said, "We never dared to say in a conversation that we were Jews."

didn't realize that our banking history was not relevant anymore. Everything was different," she said. "We had no line of credit, no overdraft ... and we had to make the payroll. Sometimes there's nothing left for you," said David. Most difficult of all, said Nadine, was not being able to afford to travel to France as often as they wished to visit their aging parents. "David lost both parents. I lost my father. The kids didn't see them much," she said, sadly.

**Successes:** The company the Koffs envisioned has grown into Real Time Radiology Teleradiology Services, over which Nadine presides. David is chief of diagnostic imaging at Hamilton Health Sciences and chair of the department of radiology at McMaster University. The Koffs' three sons inherited their parents work ethic and are all thriving. Their eldest son, a software engineer and youngest son, who works for Google, live in California. Their middle son, a successful architect who designed the couple's beautiful Ancaster home, lives in Toronto.

**Thoughts about Canada:** "It's an oddity in this world, a wonderful oddity," said David. "It's wonderful. We are so glad to be here," said Nadine.

**Challenges:** Starting a business in Canada was more difficult than the Koffs had imagined. "We

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## ALON CORET

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**Who came:** Alon Coret, 10, his sister, Michal, eight, and their parents Andu and Judith.

**Why they left:** Alon's parents came to Toronto on radiology fellowships in 2003. Their intention was to return to Israel in two years.

**Challenges:** When both Alon's parents were offered positions at St. Joseph's Hospital, they decided to move to Burlington. The move was hardest on their teenage son. "It wasn't an easy transition," said Alon. "Today the issue is more the impact of juggling this idea of being a dual citizen ... Oftentimes it translates into sort of feeling a little bit out of place in both places. I'm definitely not a tourist when I go to Israel but I'm also aware of the fact that I'm not from here either. It's not like you can just give up another part of who you are." The question of whether to return to Israel once he reached army age weighed on Alon considerably. During Israel's war with Hamas in the summer of 2014, he made a point of returning to volunteer with Magen David Adom. "I felt that was a duty being served ... just being there and participating in this nation wide sort of family struggle."

**Turning Points:** Alon found the sense of belonging which had eluded him during high school at McMaster University where he was active with student groups Hillel and Israel on Campus. "I didn't think of (not having Jewish or Israeli friends in high school) as anything that was lacking but then going to Mac, I realized that I did want that kind of community and I'm very happy to have found that Jewish family in Canada." Getting accepted into the University of Toronto medical school was another turning point. "It was a big thing that I worked hard towards for so long and I really appreciated being given such an incredible opportunity."

**Thoughts about Canada:** "Israel's my childhood. As an Israeli and as a Jew I relate to it as a place that needs nurturing. No matter where you are in the world ... that part of you is always there." Here in Canada, however, "there's a sense of calm and sanity here that you really almost don't find anywhere else. I open my phone every morning and see some new development in the world, some other horrific act of violence that seems to be sparked for no reason ... It's an oasis of calm and peace here."

**IMMIGRATED FROM: ISRAEL**  
**ARRIVED IN HAMILTON: 2005**



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## CHARLES AND MICHELE SCHNEIDER

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**Who came:** Charles and Michele Schneider, their 18-month-old toddler Lawrie and expecting Evan.

**Why they left:** Charles was offered an opportunity to open a telex franchise in Hamilton. They also were seeking a better future for their children away from apartheid South Africa.

**Challenges:** With Telex technology on its way out, Charles ended up selling his business. Over the next several years, he would try his hand at a number of different ventures. "I can tell you that out of the 30 years we've been here it's only the last 10 years that we've taken steps ahead," said Charles. "For the first 20 years here, let me tell you, it was tough." For Michele, the most difficult part of their first years in Canada was being isolated at home with a toddler and a newborn. "We didn't feel as though we were making it," she said.

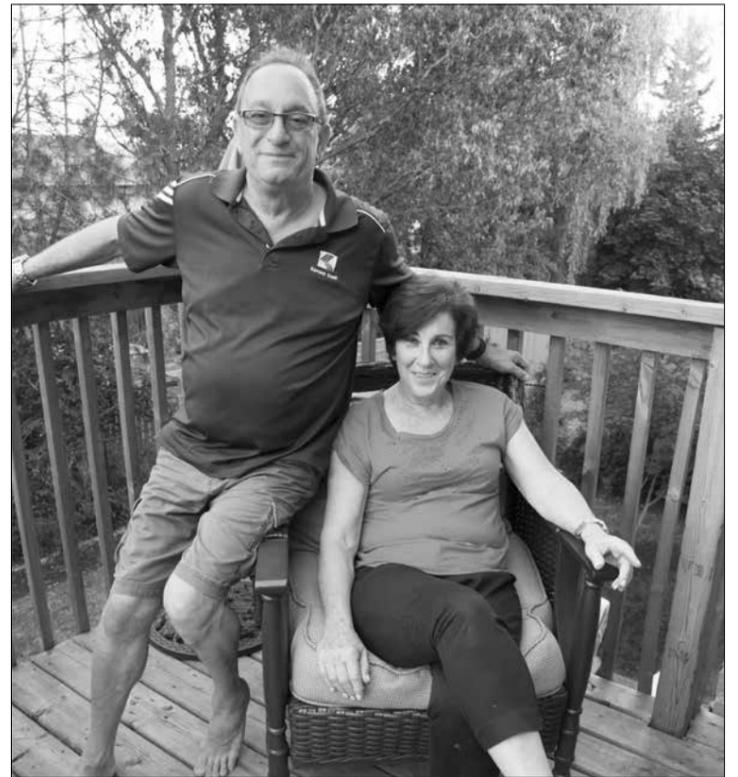
**Turning Points:** Michele's sense of isolation disappeared as soon as she began meeting other young mothers at her children's pre-school. Additionally, the influx of other South African families into Hamilton throughout the 1990s gave the Schneiders a new extended family with whom to share Shabbat dinners and Jewish holidays. The Jewish Community

Centre, where Michele found work as a program director and Charles coached indoor soccer, also played an important role in their acclimatization. "A lot of people got to know us," said Charles.

**Standout memory:** The time their son, Evan came home from school complaining that the girls in his Grade One class were chasing him for a kiss. When Charles asked whether the girl who caught him was pretty, Evan replied, "Yes, but she's always dressed in black." Her son's reply made his mother smile. "That was his way of looking at (a child whose skin colour was different from his own), whereas we grew up, there wouldn't be any black kids in school with you. We were segregated the whole time. To me that was the best thing we had ever done for our kid because that's how he saw her."

**Successes:** Charles has found fulfillment and financial security in the steel business, and Michele, still deeply involved in Jewish communal work, is the office administrator at Kehila. They are immensely proud of their three sons: Lawrie, a manager of strategic planning at the CBC, Evan, a second year medical school resident, and Stephen, who teaches elementary school in Milton. "It's taken awhile to get there, but we got there," said Michele.

**IMMIGRATED FROM: SOUTH AFRICA**  
**ARRIVED IN HAMILTON: 1986**



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## LUIS MEZA

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**Who came:** Luis and Ronit Meza, and their three children, aged 17, 15 and 9.

**Why they left:** With Venezuela descending into political turmoil and violence, the Mezas were looking for a safer future for their children.

**Challenges:** Starting a business in a foreign country where you have no contacts nor any familiarity with the language or the culture has taken determination and sacrifice. Luis, who had years of experience in the wholesale and retail coffee business in Venezuela, made the decision early on to stay with what he knew best. In 2011, the family opened their first Mezza Caffe in Ancaster, and a second location in downtown Hamilton's Lister Block two years later, where Luis can be found seven days a week. When Ronit once remarked to her husband that she never imagined they'd be working this hard at this time of their lives, Luis replied, "I may be working as hard at 53 as I did when I was 20, but I think I moved up because I can't imagine myself being back there."

**Standout memory:** The time his wife started to panic when their youngest daughter, who was learning how

to ride a bike, pedaled out of their view. "Ronit was panicking not because she was worried about traffic. It was a quiet street. She was worried about her being by herself ... Of course we came here looking for safety but in your day to day life, your brain can't process that this is a safe place and you're ok."

**Successes:** The two older Meza children work in the family business: Their son, a graduate of McMaster University's DeGroote School of Business, who recently wed a Canadian born young woman, and their older daughter, a graduate of Ottawa's Le Cordon Bleu Culinary Arts Institute, who is their on-site pastry chef. The youngest is studying kinesiology at Western University. Since coming to Canada Ronit received a Masters in Theology from McMaster University.

**Thoughts about Canada:** When all five members of the Meza family received their Canadian citizenship in February of 2015, Luis recalled feeling an enormous sense of relief. "I cannot explain the load it took off my back once we had that because there was always a fear inside me (that they'd be forced to return Venezuela) ... but once we received that, the days were brighter."

**IMMIGRATED FROM: VENEZUELA**  
**ARRIVED IN HAMILTON: 2007**





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### PROFILE

## DINA HONIG

Immigration Consultant

Dina Honig draws on her own experiences as an immigrant when advising newcomers on the complexities of immigration to Canada



Story and photo by WENDY SCHNEIDER, the Hamilton Jewish News

Starting your life over in a foreign country is a life-changing undertaking that can be fraught with challenges. Dina Honig should know. When her family moved to Hamilton from Israel in 2003, after her husband was hired to teach at Wilfrid Laurier University, she found that leaving behind family, friends and a fulfilling career, was much more difficult than she'd anticipated. The process of having to requalify as a career counsellor, find employment, while at the same time being an anchor of stability for her teen-aged children was often overwhelming, but Honig's persistence would pay off when she found work in her field at the University of Guelph. It was there that she discovered an affinity for working with international students, a realization that would lead her down a new career path as an immigration consultant. Honig's new business Doorway to Canada, is a full service immigration consultancy agency that offers a range of services to potential newcomers.

Asked what her best advice is for newcomers to Canada, Honig offered the following tips:

#### Learn English

"Try to improve your English as much and as fast as you can." Although one may speak English in his or her native country, it may not be at the same level as Canada. Be open to improving your English speaking skills by listening to English speaking talk radio, watching English news and making friends with English speaking people.

#### Go beyond your comfort zone

Don't limit yourself to be only with people from your native country or from your own language group.

Be open to making friends with people from all religious and cultural groups. "Don't isolate yourself, and don't ghettoize yourself by only socializing with people from your own culture. Try to meet as many Canadians as possible."

#### Volunteer in Your Field

Honig says that getting involved in the community by volunteering with professional associations, charities or causes that are important to you can go a long way towards building your network and your relationships that will help ensure your success in Canada. Honig chairs the City of Hamilton's Advisory Committee for Immigrants and Refugees. As the only Israeli and the only Jew on the committee, Honig is engaging with the general community in a meaningful way, and modeling the high value that Judaism places on social justice. Honig is also putting her career counselling and immigration consulting skills to work at Hamilton Jewish Social Services where she volunteers two mornings a week. There, she offers career advice to both newcomers to our community and Canadian-born clients who are seeking help finding new employment.

#### Find a Support Group

Finding a community of people who share your interests and background is one of the most important aspects of feeling at home in a new country. "To find friends, to find people that think like me, to understand the Canadian mentality which is totally different from the Israeli mentality – Na'amat helped me a lot with the cultural adaptation I had to go through."

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## OBITUARY NOTICE

DATER, Gertrude (Gitty) L. of Winter Park, FL for the past 33 years formerly of Hamilton, Ontario and Detroit, MI passed away on August 22, 2016 in Delray Beach; FL. Gertrude was born in Hamilton, Ontario 84 years ago. Left to cherish her memory is her beloved husband Jerome Dater, her two loving daughters, Marcy Weiss and Cheryl Dater. Her five cherished grandchildren Ryan Weiss, Kevin Weiss, Alexis Katz, Shoshana Katz, Elizabeth Katz (Zach Kaufman) and her devoted sisters Ann Gooblar, Sara Kovalsky and Donna (Arnold) Isenberg. Services and interment were held on Wednesday, August 24, 2016 in Boynton Beach, FL. For additional information contact Rubin Memorial Chapel at (561) 853-3000.

Poetry

corner

debt

your ancestors lay by cool water.  
a skin of wine was thought profane  
until a gift was poured for them.

you do not wear this history  
but it waits in a bright folded stripe  
above your heart.

now, on Aberdeen Street,  
in the bird-banishing cold,  
you give me a present of goose feathers --

you, who are owed by law  
the cheek of every animal,  
to me, because, you said, I am a scribe --

I imagine you, frailer than your talk,  
stooping in the wake  
of their echoing migration.

I am sick with thanks for this,  
and for every painful, sweet reversal  
that drops from the wing of glory.

Rabbi Yonah Lavery-Israeli

The poet's notes on her poem

At the time when I received the goose feathers, I was also in the middle of learning with my colleagues laws pertaining to kohanim (the priestly caste). The traditional role of the kohen is that of a gift-receiver; indeed, classically, much of the food they ate and the clothes they wore came from gifts (terumah, matanot, reishit hazez). I felt some irony that instead, a kohen was giving a gift to me.

Here are some of the ideas alluded to in the poem:

– “by cool water”

this is because in antiquity kohanim would live by mikvaot, because they could only eat their gifted food in ritual purity.

– “a bright stripe over your heart”

I was thinking of a pocket handkerchief, as a symbol for clothing which is not the primary part of one's costume, but is still

meant to be noticed. In addition, the subject of the poem and I once had a disagreement in which I described a pocket handkerchief as useless, but he said that actually it can be used in many ways, for example, to help a crying person. That made it an even better image to me.

– “the cheek of every animal”

when one slaughters an animal, its cheek (as well as its foreleg and maw/abomasum) are to be given to a kohen or kohenet. We don't often hear about it happening these days simply because we are so removed from slaughter in general.

– “echoing migration”

I wanted to draw a parallel between autumn geese and kohanim as creatures whose presence is diminishing in the world, although we do not know what will return in a new season.

CANADIAN PREMIERE | October 22, 2016 to May 14, 2017



Yuri Dojc Schoolroom, Bardejov 2006, chromogenic print Courtesy of the artist

Last Folio

Photographs by Yuri Dojc  
Film by Katya Krausova



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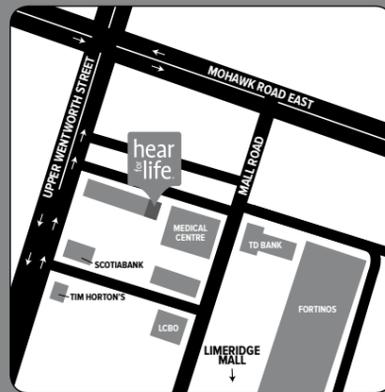
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Working with Syrian refugee children this summer was an eye and heart-opening experience for cousins Becky and Jackie Katz

Jaclyn Katz (standing left) and Becky Katz (seated, third from left) with some of the Syrian refugee children they taught this summer. Their Palestinian interpreter, Mayada Abu-Shanab, looks on from the other end of the table.

# Compassion without borders

When local artist and art educator Becky Katz was asked to organize an art camp for Syrian refugee children this summer, she could think of no better to run it than her cousin and frequent collaborator, Jackie Katz. The latter's extensive experience teaching theatre to refugee children coupled with both young women's natural inclination towards empathy and compassion made the collaboration particularly rewarding. Below, the two open up about what they learned from the experience.

**Where did the idea for this camp come from and how was it funded?**

**BK:** The summer camp was special because it was created specifically because of a fundraising concert that took place on June 3 by this well-known band (American alternative rock band) The National. All the proceeds went towards art, recreation and music programming for newcomers. So because Centre 3, where I work, had an existing relationship with Wesley Urban Ministries working with government assisted refugees for the past two years, they selected us as their arts partner.

**How did Jackie get involved?**

**JK:** Becky was very aware about my interest in working with children, particularly refugee children. We've collaborated on all

different kinds of projects and so everything about it made sense.

**How were your roles defined?**

**BK:** I coordinated the camp, but because I'm overseeing a lot of projects, I'm not able to commit time to all of them, but I do very much enjoy teaching and being on the front lines like the miniature paint lesson I taught today. Jackie is the main facilitator.

**What role does your Palestinian interpreter play?**

**BK:** Mayada interprets for Wesley on a regular basis. She was incredible and single-handedly made the camp better by recruiting more children because at the beginning of camp we were losing a lot of campers to an Arabic school that was happening at the same time.

**What is your goal for these children?**

**JK:** Every single day I check in with each individual kid and make sure that they are having their personal best time. And we do accomplish that, every single day, every single kid is in heaven, loving it, wanting to come back tomorrow.

**What have your interactions been like with the parents?**

**BK:** All of them are quite appreciative and gracious. One family I could tell had a lot of separation anxiety which kind of broke my

heart because I just can't imagine what they've gone through. One of their sons was left in Turkey so I think they have a hard time leaving each other. So the dad was calling my cell phone throughout the day and checking on his kids and he actually came and picked them up early.

**JK:** A lot of the families are living in the residence at Wesley so they don't have their own home. So they have caseworkers figuring out housing. I had a dad walk up and down James Street for about an hour with five kids looking for the studio, but because he didn't read or speak English he gave up and went back. So we ended up having to say just come to the camp, we're going to meet you at Wesley. Some of the parents weren't able to wrap their minds around their kids getting free child care and art lessons. It feels unsafe and they don't want to separate from their kids. We had parents yesterday not leave because they just couldn't handle it. For the first time in my life I spoke to a woman in a full burka and it was really interesting. She had these bright blue eyes and she was so sweet, just a normal mom.

**Do you have any sense of what these kids have personally gone through?**

**JK:** I do not know the particulars of

any traumas because I'm not their caseworker. I'm there to teach them art and give them a really good, free, fun time. What I do know is that they were all in camps in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan for more than two years and have a fondness for Syria. The younger kids don't remember Syria but those who are older remember everything and talk about how beautiful it is there.

**What else have you observed?**

**JK:** There's a maturity in these kids that I've never experienced in any other group of young people that I've worked with and I believe it to be because of how fast they had to grow up. The older children are so close to their siblings. I've never seen anything like it. There's a sense of having been through everything together and therefore they're just so bonded. It's for that reason too, I think, that they all have an extreme fondness for their parents. I also found their modesty really interesting. The girls start wearing their hijab when they get their period. After that, they won't dance or do things that draw attention to themselves, because of something so holy and beautiful. They believe that God is watching them and so they do everything with the utmost care.

**How has working with this population affected you?**

**JK:** Because I grew up with half a day of Hebrew I was really able to catch on to Arabic quickly. The intonations are very similar. The way that it's written right to left. I worry about the prejudice these families are facing. We had a guy yell out of his car window "Arabs" two days ago. I also worry about the negative reactions to what I'm doing in my own community, because of the fear that's instilled in them via the media. From so many people I hear, "did you hear about the Syrian asylum seeker who blew up this or blew up that?" The Islamophobia is horrendous. The prejudice of the world is against this group of people.

**What was most surprising thing you learned about this culture?**

**JK:** Two of the children I work with are disabled. They've suffered brain damage, but they're unbelievable kids. I expected because there's so much stigma around mental health in western culture that there would be in this case as well. But they are treated so beautifully and have been taken care of so well by their family. The love that I've seen in all of these families has been overwhelming to me.

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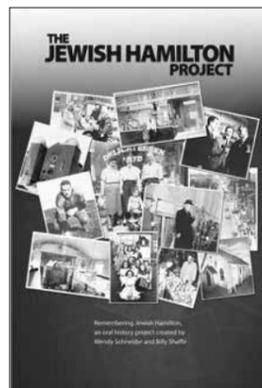


Hamilton Hebrew Academy students visit the Kosher Food Bank.

Photo courtesy of the HHA

**SUPPORT THE FOOD BANK**

With Rosh Hashana fast approaching we are all thinking about and beginning to plan Yom Tov celebrations with friends and family. While planning your holiday, please keep in mind the many families and individuals in our community who sadly don't have the means to do the same. For them, holiday time is full of anxiety, loneliness, and sadness. Yom Tov is a time of renewal and celebration when we reflect on how we can help others by sharing our good fortune. Please help Jewish Social Services provide the less fortunate in our community with the necessities for the holiday season. Your contributions will allow you to share in bringing a sweet new year to those who need it the most. You can also help by telling your friends and family to make them aware of the need and help our network grow. You can reach us by calling 905-627-9922 ex 21, or ex 23, or drop into our office at 30 King St. E. in Dundas. All donations are tax deductible.



The Rosenshein Museum at Beth Jacob Synagogue presents **Treasures from the Jewish Hamilton Project**, on Sunday, Oct. 30 at 10:30 a.m. to noon, the first of a four-part series offering the community a window onto the archive of Jewish Hamilton's oral history. Video footage will be followed by discussion. The footage to be shown was not included in the Jewish Hamilton Project DVD that came out in 2009; this series will be its first public screening. Refreshments will be served. \$5 cover.

**MAC HILLEL**

BEN BUCKLER

Summer vacation is incredibly fun, but McMaster Hillel has been busy making sure this coming September is just as amazing too. This fall, students will have the opportunity to attend



Ben Buckler

our widely popular welcome back events such as our annual welcome BBQ, Shabbat dinners, and weekly bagel lunches. We're also incredibly excited to launch a new initiative — Hillel Welcome Week Reps! Our amazing team of reps are working to welcome new McMaster students with the attitude, outfits, and excitement that shows off the best Hillel has to offer, right from day one. The special first year events that the reps will run, and the atmosphere and guidance they will provide to others will ensure that new students, as well as our current students, enter the year on the highest note — *Ben Buckler is a 4th year Arts and Science student and McMaster Hillel student president.*

JUDITH DWORKIN

McMaster Hillel and Hillel Ontario welcome Arzu Moshav as our new Israel Fellow. Arzu will facilitate and encourage students' growth in Israel education and advocacy over the upcoming school year and will



Arzu Moshav and Judith Dworkin

also manage the Birthright Israel program. Arzu, who is living in Hamilton, will work with both McMaster and Guelph students, splitting her time between the two campuses. She is very excited to get to know the McMaster students as well as the Jewish community in Hamilton as her new home for the coming year. Please help me in welcoming Arzu to our community and ask her about the work she is doing with students this year as she brings her love for Israel to campus. For more information about Hillel and Jewish life on campus, please contact judith.dworkin@hillelontario.org — *Judith Dworkin in the director of McMaster Hillel.*

Photos courtesy of McMaster Hillel

**At this time of year we all plead with G-d:**

**Give us: a good year** for ourselves, our children and all our loved ones.

**And G-d pleads with us as well:**

**Give Me: a good year** by giving to My children.



**G-d declares:** "The orphans and widows are My beloved children; if you will bring joy to My children on days of celebration, I in turn will bring joy to you and your children" (based on Midrash Pesikta).

**Michal is one of G-d's children!**

Four years ago, when Michal was just Two years old, her father passed away, leaving her mother with four small children. She was left all alone to deal with the terrible crisis, the enormous pain and the crushing poverty. Since that tragic day, the **Diskin Orphan Fund of Israel** has stood by Michal and her entire family. We are there every day, year after year. We are there for them with all our hearts – discreetly, with respect and with great love. Be it clothing, family events, hot meals, dental care or tutors...Michal's family gets it all from Diskin. We give them whatever it takes to hold the family together; to enable Michal and her sisters to smile, to live and grow up "just like everyone else."

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# Shalom Village Hustle for Health

## Brand new name, same great event!

It was 15 years ago that seasoned runners first joined forces with Shalom Village residents, staff, and volunteers to run, walk, and roll in support of the Club Fitness Centre at Shalom Village.

The sight of serious long-distance runners sharing a race course with seniors striving to improve their lives through active living is one you will likely not see anywhere else. And the heart-warming smiling faces as they cross the finish line leave no doubt about the value of this very special event.

### Hustle for Health was born

Last year it was decided to modify the name of our annual fall fundraising event. When it came time to choose a new name for this event, we wanted to engage our residents in helping us with this choice.

We had so many wonderful submissions from our residents that it was extremely difficult to pick just one! Nonetheless, Shalom Village resident, Peggy Aiken was the winner with her Shalom Village Hustle for Health suggestion. Everyone was thrilled, especially Aiken!

"What I love about this event is it is a time where people of all ages and abilities come together to participate and support Shalom Village" said Aiken. "What I really liked about the old name was the word hustle, so I thought about what worked with that. Health naturally came to me because the event is so good for your health." Voilà Hustle for Health was born.

### Brand new name, same great event

William Shakespeare reminds us that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet,



Shalom Village residents, staff and the Hamilton community come together for a fun filled day to celebrate active living at Shalom Village. Photo by Tony Finelli.



Greg Almas, Mike Nielsen and Jeanette O'Leary celebrate and thank Peggy Aiken for submitting the suggestion of the Shalom Village Hustle for Health. Mazel Tov Peggy! Photo by Deanna Levy.

and the latkes, hot dogs, and cider are always delicious! The Shalom Village Hustle for Health is a fun filled afternoon where we all come together for a worthwhile cause.

### Hope to see you there

We hope you will join us at the 2016 Hustle for Health on Sunday, Nov. 13 as a participant or part of a team. If that's not your style, consider volunteering at the event, making a donation, pledging a participant, or becoming a corporate sponsor.

Funds raised at the Hustle for Health support The Club Fitness Centre and the health and wellness programs keeping Shalom Village residents fit and well.

For more information about the Shalom Village Hustle for Health, please contact Mike

Nielsen at 905-529-1613 ext 220 or email [mike@shalomvillage.ca](mailto:mike@shalomvillage.ca).

### The Club

The Club offers personalized fitness programs for all Shalom Village residents and people in the community over the age of 70. Head Coach Mike Nielsen and his team lead participants through a detailed assessment process to develop a fitness plan suitable to their individual needs and abilities. The Club makes it possible for members to stay active and increase their mobility and independence.

### Registration is open, so act now!

To register, pledge, or make a donation visit [www.shalomvillage.ca](http://www.shalomvillage.ca). For corporate sponsorship information and benefits contact [laurie.pringle@shalomvillage.ca](mailto:laurie.pringle@shalomvillage.ca).

# L'Shana Tova from Shalom Village

## Wishing you a sweet and happy New Year

As we come together to celebrate the High Holidays, Shalom Village extends our warmest wishes for this New Year, 5777.

Rosh Hashanah marks the start of a new year — a time of humble prayer, joyful celebration, and hope for a new beginning.

The Days of Awe (**Yamim Noraim**), open many possibilities for renewal. Each year we hope to recognize the blessings and challenges met in the year gone by. We pray for the wisdom, courage, and strength to begin the New Year and face the unknown.

We see the beauty of Rosh Hashanah is in its inherent message: we have the capacity at every age and stage of life to change for the better. At the heart of this holiday is the belief that the power of personal transformation is not outside us but lies within.

In this season of renewal, we celebrate that spirit; we honour our fathers and our mothers; and rededicate ourselves to the work of **Tikkun Olam**, repairing the world.

From all of us at Shalom Village, **L'Shana Tova Tikatevu**. May this year be a year of blessing, good health, and peace for you and those you love and may you be inscribed for blessing in the Book of Life.

### Shalom Village Services

**Rosh Hashanah:** Oct. 3 at 3:45 P.M. Oct. 3 and 4 at 9:30 A.M.

**Kol Nidre:** Oct. 11 at 6:20 P.M.

**Yom Kippur:** Oct. 11 and 12 at 9:30 A.M. Evening service Oct. 12 at 3:45 P.M.



### Honouring our fathers and our mothers with tribute cards ... let us do the work!

The Shalom Village Charitable Foundation invites you to send one of our beautiful, personalized Rosh Hashanah greetings and tribute cards this new year, featuring artwork by our residents.

Allow us to mail our festive cards to your friends and family to let them know a donation has been made in their honour.

By reaching out to family, friends and loved ones this Jewish new year through the purchase of our Rosh Hashanah cards, you touch not only the recipients, but also the lives of our residents at Shalom Village.

As you celebrate the High Holidays, please consider sending one of our lovely cards at our traditional tribute card levels:

Chai (\$18), Silver (\$25), Double Chai (\$36), Gold (\$50), Platinum (\$100), or Diamond (\$100+)

Please contact Nadine Nock at 905-529-1613 ext 356 or email [nadine.nock@shalomvillage.ca](mailto:nadine.nock@shalomvillage.ca) to order a card today!



Support Shalom Village residents by sending your friends and family one of our tribute cards this Rosh Hashanah. Proceeds from our tribute cards support the resident **Possibilities Fund** at Shalom Village. This card features the art of Irving Levine.

## Thank You

Grateful thanks to the families of **John Kelly, David Schultz, Rose Fleischer, Jean Riches, David Levy and Bud Harbury**

for requesting donations to Shalom Village in lieu of flowers.

Memorial donations support the **Possibilities Fund** at Shalom Village, making many special programs and services possible for our residents.



### Shalom Village

[shalomvillage.ca](http://shalomvillage.ca)  
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## JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

The Blue Box was introduced in 1904, three years after the creation of the Jewish National Fund (JNF). It represents a unique connection between world Jewry and Israel, and still plays an important role.

In Hamilton, as in thousands of communities across the globe, the Blue Box was once found in virtually every Jewish home. Everyone put their spare coins in the Blue Box every week. Blue Box Collection Day became an exciting, fun day for teams of youth and whole families, as they collected the boxes, heavy with a year's worth of tzedakah,

Laura Laengerer remembers: "As a little girl I looked forward to Blue Box Day. The community knew we were coming and many people were waiting with their boxes in hand! It was an honour to take part, an outing not a chore!"

Even as charitable giving changed over the decades, the Blue Box remains as a key element; its educational value remain constant, and reaffirms our

partnership with the Land of Israel.

This year, in honour of JNF's 115th anniversary, JNF Hamilton announces an exciting "amazing race" scavenger hunt. On Sunday, Oct. 30, teams will meet challenges, while simultaneously collecting Blue Boxes. Great prizes will be awarded at the ensuing pizza party.

JNF's efforts to develop the land, plant parks and forests, and build roads and water reservoirs, has evolved in the 21st century to include cutting edge environmental and agricultural research, nanotechnology to combat desertification, and high-tech solutions for many ecological challenges.

JNF also builds hospital wings, therapeutic gardens, hiking and cycling trails, and facilities for the disabled.

Now is the time to ensure the continuity of a meaningful tradition. Place a Blue Box in your home and stay tuned for details on the Amazing Blue Box Hunt!

## TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM

Temple Anshe Sholom is one of 15 Reform congregations in North America selected to participate in the newly formed Union for Reform Judaism Community of Practice dedicated to Reimagining Congregational Education. This URJ Community of Practice is a congregational networking group for congregations seeking to discover new ways to innovate congregational education. Temple Anshe Sholom will have the opportunity to meet with leaders from congregations with common interests to share ideas and experiment with new strategies. TAS will also have access to the URJ's professional staff and expert consultants, some of the most renowned thought leaders in their fields.

"The timing of this initiative is perfect for us," says Rabbi Jordan Cohen. "With the recent transition in our educational leadership and the evolving needs of our families, we were committed to undertaking this kind of process on our own. Being selected to work with other congregations and Jewish educational

professionals from North America and Israel is an honour. Participating in this Community of Practice will push us to come up with a newly reconfigured program for our young people that will reflect the best practices in Jewish Education and be as accessible and engaging as possible for our families and students."

The 15 congregations will work together formally for 18 months to push the boundaries of existing congregational efforts. Participating congregations will receive guidance from peers and advisors to experiment in their own communities, create congregational innovations, and garner skills that will benefit all areas of congregational life. In addition to monthly virtual gatherings and e-learning opportunities, the congregation will receive coaching, support, and consultation to support the planning and implementation of educational experiments. Results of these experiments will be shared with the Reform movement at large.

## HAMILTON HEBREW ACADEMY

Geoffrey Zalter joins the school this year as its new physed teacher. Born in Montreal, Geoffrey grew up in Hamilton, attended the HHA and excelled in its sports program.

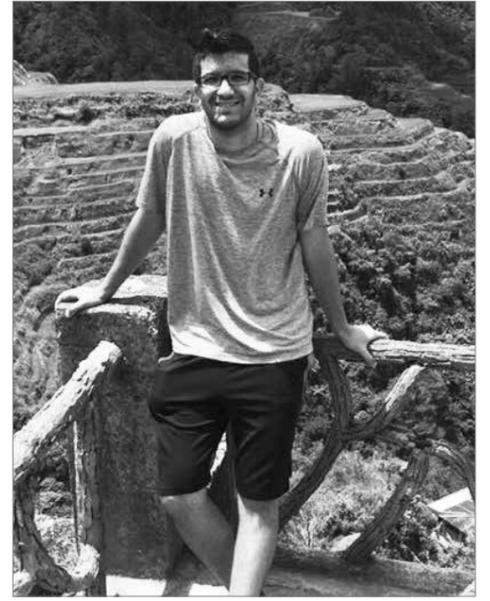
After a successful stint as Student Life Co-ordinator at Hillel Ottawa – he hopes to help strengthen the future of his community and alma mater.

"Reflecting after I graduated, I realized how privileged I was to receive such a transformative gift," Zalter reflected, "an HHA education. I hope to replicate that for a new generation."

Working with this age group is not a new experience for this young educator. While studying at McMaster University, Zalter served as the director of Camp Kadimah. Zalter always knew he wanted to pursue a career in education. After receiving his degree from McMaster, he enrolled in Teacher's College earning his Bachelor of primary education studies at Charles Sturt University. He then spent 10 months teaching English in Rishon LeZion, Israel, as a participant in the Masa Israel teaching fellows program.

During his years at the HHA, Zalter was a key member of the senior volleyball team that won the championship in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board league. Zalter was also voted most valued player of his basketball team for three consecutive years.

In addition to athletics, Zalter will spearhead various extracurricular events and after school programs. "Education is so much more than the



Geoff Zalter

Photo courtesy of Geoff Zalter

general studies we typically think of," he said. "It's about capturing the excitement and love for learning in all areas of life." With the return of Geoffrey Zalter, the sense of excitement and love for learning for the children of our community is just beginning.

To register your children visit [www.hamilton-hebrewacademy.ca](http://www.hamilton-hebrewacademy.ca) or call 905-528-0330.

## BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE

The Beth Jacob Israeli Film Festival comes to you in two parts this year! Our opening event will take place on Nov. 27, 2016 with the film *Gett: The Trial of Viviane Amsalem*.

While we celebrate each and every wedding with the joy of everlasting love and a permanent relationship, reality tells us that many contemporary weddings result in divorce. How does traditional Judaism and contemporary matrimonial reality converge? In Israel, there are no civil marriages, and no civil divorces. There is only one court – the rabbinical court.

In the film *Gett*, Viviane Amsalem (Ronit Elkabetz, co-director and lead actress)

goes to a religious court to obtain a religiously legal divorce, as their 20 year marriage has fallen apart. Her husband refuses, insisting on trying to save the marriage. The trial proceeds painfully over many years, slowly unpacking the human suffering and biases of a system of male judges who seem to respect only the credibility of male voices who rule for and about men. Despite the court's eventual ruling in favour of divorce, Viviane is repeatedly denied her 'gett', and struggles to move on with her religious and personal life, attempting to receive the justice meted out by the court.

The movie will be followed by a panel discussion by

Beth Jacob's Rabbi Hillel Lavery-Yisraeli and Rabbi Joel Katzin, who will be arriving from Jerusalem specifically for this event. Katzin is an Israeli lawyer who specializes in family law and is well acquainted with the nuances of obtaining a 'gett' and in dealing with the Israeli religious court. The panel will discuss the relevance, contrasts, and difficulties depicted in the film, and examine some of the nuances between secular and religious views of marriage and divorce. Screening is at 2 p.m. Panel and discussion 4:15-5:15 p.m. Tickets are \$10 at the door or in advance by calling 905-522-1351.

The lawyers and staff at Ross & McBride LLP wish the entire community a happy and healthy New Year.

# L'Shanah Tovah.



Brad Wiseman

Hon. David Steinberg

Barry Yellin

Jeffrey Manishen



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**KEHILA JEWISH COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL**

JULIA KOLLEK

"Just do it – you won't regret it." That's the advice Jenn Lobb would give parents thinking about choosing Kehila for their children. "It's been the best decision I ever made by far," she said.

Jenn and Ryan's three children are all Kehila students and the couple are impressed with how Hebrew, French and English are taught through a themed cross-curricular program, based on the Jewish calendar. "They love learning and going to school, and we're pleased with the way they've developed their Jewish identity."

At Kehila a mentoring program pairs older and younger students to create an atmosphere of kindness. Children learn to include, care and look out for each other. This unique approach is one that Jenn, herself a teacher, says is hard to find in other schools. Jenn has seen the multiple benefits that peer mentoring provides.

"It's wonderful to see how my kids have learned to be constructive members of the community."



Isaiah Lobb (centre) reads to Nate Rochweg (left) and Saul Biro.

Her 5th grade son Isaiah has been paying forward his own mentoring; he took young Nate Rochweg under his wing. During Nate's first year at Kehila his mother Rachel saw how he grew from being hesitant to confident and developed a strong sense of independence.

"Now he's a role model to his own siblings," she said.

To find out more about Kehila visit [www.kehilaschool.com](http://www.kehilaschool.com) or call Michele at the office 905.527.7729.

**BETH JACOB HEBREW SCHOOL**

RINA RODAK

The Bnai Mitzvah Leadership Experience, led by Rabbi Hillel, Cantor Eyal and Education Director Rina Rodak, will take place during the Wednesday Hebrew School time slot. This new program is open to any 6th and 7th grader in the community. The program's goal is to explore the participants' Jewish self as he or she experiences the pre-to post-Bnei Mitzvah transition, and to foster camaraderie within their peer group and families.

We are also instituting a post-Bnai Mitzvah program. Led by Milena Romalis, this investigative and activity-based experience will involve guest speakers, field trips, and hot-topic discussions. It will take place once per month, not always on the same day of the week. The curriculum will introduce students to broad and open-ended modes

of Judaic learning. The program launch will take place on September 18 at 10:30 a.m. in the Beth Jacob kitchen – the students will be cooking and baking up a traditional Sephardi storm with Cantor Eyal. The full-year calendar will be distributed at the launch.

The Morris Black Public Speaking Contest for students in grades 3 to 8 is a long-time tradition in the Hamilton Jewish Community. This year, Beth Jacob will be offering a public speaking prep course for our students. Together, the students will decide on their topics, develop their ideas, edit one another's drafts, and practice presenting their talks.

To register for any of the above learning opportunities, or if you have questions, please contact Rina Rodak by emailing [school@bethjacobsynagogue.ca](mailto:school@bethjacobsynagogue.ca) or call 905-522-1351.

**JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**

HAZEL BOON

The Jewish Genealogical Society – Hamilton and Area (JGSH) is about to begin our 14th season. Our monthly meetings are held at Temple Anshe Sholom and begin at 7:30 pm with a bit of social time for members to "schmooze". Some of us have used the summer hiatus to work on research or to get help with what we like to call "brick walls"; doesn't everyone reach a point where they feel unable to find a way to go further with a particular family line? Breaking through those walls is something worth sharing with others in the hope that one success can lead to many successes.

On Wednesday, Sept. 21 we welcome David Malamed who will speak to us about Privacy, Confidentiality and Ethics in Genealogy.

For our meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 26, JGSH member Moishe Gold will present Ozarow Remembered - The Helen Klaiman Interview. As Gold was researching his ancestral shtetl of Ozarow, Poland, he had

a unique opportunity to interview one of its pre-war inhabitants. On Aug. 16, 2001, Gold spoke to and videotaped his conversation with Helen Klaiman z"l who regaled him with tales of the town, its inhabitants and its horrible fate under the Nazi regime. Moishe will be joined by Helen's daughters, Beverly Sobel and Sarah Klaiman for a very special evening.

Our final meeting will take place on Wednesday, Nov. 23 when we welcome Beth Jacob's newest gift to Hamilton, Rabbi Hillel Lavery-Yisraeli. The title of his presentation will be The Concept of Family in Jewish Tradition and its Limits in Shaping Identity.

If you are interested in family history we hope you will join us at one or all of these meetings. We offer assistance to those who are new to genealogical research as well as those who have been at it for a while. Your first meeting is on the house!

# Off the beaten path

An interview with kirtan singers Benjy and Heather Wertheimer on the appeal of devotional Hindu chanting

by WENDY SCHNEIDER, the Hamilton Jewish News



Kirtan singers Benjy and Heather Wertheimer see no conflict between their spiritual practice and their Jewish roots.

Photo courtesy of Benjy and Heather Wertheimer

The joke, well circulated among Jewish practitioners of Buddhism goes something like this: A Jewish woman shleps to the Himalayas in search of a famous guru. After long negotiations with the saffron-clothed monk who screens his master's visitors, she is finally granted access to the holy man on condition that she utters no more than eight words. As she enters the cave where the holy man sits in silent meditation, she says, "Sheldon, it's your mother. Enough already, come home!"

The story speaks to the phenomenon of the disproportionate number of Jews among North American followers of Eastern spiritual practices. Among them are the singing/songwriting duo Benjy and Heather Wertheimer. The couple, based in the United States, perform kirtan, a form of devotional Hindu chanting. In a 2012 blog post, Benjy Wertheimer revealed that both his and his wife's fathers came to the United States as refugees from Nazi Germany. In an exclusive interview with the HJN, the Wertheimers discuss how they reconcile their Jewish backgrounds with their spiritual practice.

**Can you say something about your similar backgrounds?**

**HW:** Both of our fathers fled the

Nazis as very young boys. My dad at age five and Benjy's dad at age six. They both ended up becoming psychologists, going to Harvard, marrying non-Jewish women, and having three children – a girl and two younger boys. It's amazing synergy that their paths paralleled each other.

**BW:** My father and grandfather weren't practicing Jews, but were culturally extremely Jewish and that came down to us. We both feel a very strong Jewish connection in our lives. My sister actually went through a very rigorous (conversion) process and is now an orthodox Hassidic Jew.

**HW:** I grew up in a small town in Minnesota, and I also feel myself as Jewish, although I didn't grow up practicing Judaism or being directly involved in Jewish culture. Yet my father, even though he considers himself an agnostic, is extremely Jewish culturally. One thing that was a value in my family was that we were all allowed and encouraged to explore different ideas and different paths of creativity. I think perhaps that those qualities contribute to Jewish people ending up in Eastern traditions. It could also be a resonance with ritual, with tradition,

with the timelessness of ancient world traditions, or even a calling. There's also repetitive singing and chanting that occur in Judaism that could, for some, resonate with kirtan and with mantra. I mean, even think about the word "shalom" containing the word, "Om."

**Does chanting the names of Hindu deities conflict with your Jewish background?**

**BW:** I remember having problems when I was studying Indian classical music. I loved the music and I could feel the spirituality in the music, but I found the multiplicity of gods and goddesses to be very confusing. I was talking to some of my teachers about this and there was this image that one of my teachers shared with me that was very helpful. Imagine, she said, that at the centre of absolutely everything, there's this indescribably beautiful jewel, but because of our limitations, we're only able to look at it as between slats of a fence from one angle at a time. When she suggested that I think of each of the Hindu deities representing a different viewpoint, that suddenly kind of had a light go on for me. I've noticed that in my sister's tradition, you have so many different oblique references and

names for God that's also a recognition that this is something absolutely beyond concept and beyond words that we're talking about.

**HW:** I'm very clear that there's one great presence of universal consciousness that exists and is at the heart of all religions, and that the different names and deities of Hinduism are portals into that oneness.

**HW:** I very much resonate with Krishna Das's perspective which is that, when I'm chanting, I'm not focusing exactly on the deity that I'm chanting to. What I'm doing is giving myself over and surrendering into the practice of the singing itself, the awareness that arises about everything that's happening in that moment of chanting the sacred names and mantras. The feeling of continuity begins to arise, the opening of the heart. The same thing happens to me in meditation.

**Were your spiritual paths, in anyway a rebellion against your upbringing?**

**BW:** It's interesting because both of us were raised pretty much as secular humanists, and not only

we, but all of our siblings have rebelled by becoming intensely spiritual.

**HW:** I guess being raised agnostic you rebel by finding some kind of religion or spirituality. All of my brothers are born again Christians.

**Do you think Jews, by their nature, are spiritual seekers?**

**BW:** Definitely. There's definitely something to the seeker part. I have long held the position that science is also a religion. It's just the faith based belief in this thing called objective observation.

**HW:** The idea about Jews being seekers resonates with me. I think there's a kind of questioning, a looking for more.

**Thank you for your time and for speaking so openly.**

**BW:** It's a wonderful inquiry for us too. It's a beautiful reminder of our roots, where we're going and what we're trying to bring about in this incarnation.

*A longer version of this interview can be found at [www.hamiltonjewishnews.com](http://www.hamiltonjewishnews.com).*



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