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**Hamilton
Jewish**

DECEMBER 2020 | KISLEV 5781

News

The voice of Jewish Hamilton



Kehila teacher Zehava Chaimovitz does her best to teach an in-person class while still catering to students working from home.

Teaching in the age of COVID-19

AFTER MONTHS OF ANTICIPATORY ANXIETY ABOUT THE RESUMPTION OF IN-PERSON CLASSES, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ARE DISCOVERING A REASSURING INNER RESILIENCY

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

WHEN HAMILTON SCHOOLS abruptly suspended in-person classes last March, teachers and students were forced to quickly adapt to the new reality of remote learning. But after six months of a forced hiatus from the classroom, a majority of Kindergarten to Grade 12 students across the province returned to in-person classes in September. Eight weeks into the new school term, the HJN talked to teachers and post-secondary educators within the community to get a picture of how they and their students are coping with new realities.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

“It was always about the kids”



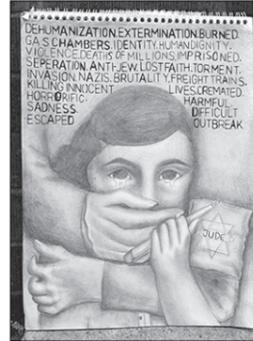
Rebecca Little

A FAMILY'S DEDICATION TO HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

THE FIRST TIME I MET my future mother-in-law, Sharon Enkin, she held my hands, looked deeply into my eyes and said, “You are my daughter now.” She then told me a charming story about my future husband. Sharon had a way of embracing you and engaging you through her incredible storytelling.

Sharon was a dedicated advocate in the Hamilton community. Her passion for education and love of children were evident in the programs she created to teach, inspire and nurture young minds. Painting in the Park, a summer program that taught children the love of painting in the outdoors, and The Golden Horseshoe Players were a couple of her initiatives to bring theatre and art

to urban kids. She fundraised in Canada to help Israeli and Palestinian children have birthday parties. For her, it was always about the kids.



This moving drawing by Cathedra High School Grade 11 student Jacquelyne Villaspin was one of two first place winners of the inaugural Sharon Enkin Student Award.

After Sharon passed away in 2009, my father-in-law, Larry partnered with the Hamilton Jewish Federation to create the Sharon Enkin Award for Excellence in Holocaust Education. The award honours extraordinary teachers from both the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board who have found a way to tell the difficult but necessary stories and create a

bridge between the past and present for our younger generation. It is presented at Federation's annual Student Symposium on the Holocaust at Mohawk College.

Every year at this symposium, my husband James and I have been amazed to see more than 1,000 curious young faces, hear their thoughtful questions and witness their engagement. We wondered how we could channel that energy into action following the one-day event. In the aftermath of the high school shooting in Parkland, Fla., we were awe inspired by how young kids stood in solidarity against gun violence that claimed the lives of their friends. Their innocence had vanished and transformed into advocacy.

Then, it hit us. Young people are the key. Why not engage the students directly in Holocaust education by creating an award to honour them? The power of their peers honouring them would give a new voice to a generation of powerful young storytellers who would champion Holocaust education for generations to come.

With the incredible support of my father-in-law, James and I brainstormed with Hamilton Jewish Federation CEO Gustavo Rymberg and campaign director, Elaine Levine, on how to make our idea a reality. The plan was to present the first Sharon Enkin Student Award at the 2020 Student Symposium on the Holocaust. While the COVID-19 pandemic delayed our plans, Elaine found a way to guide everyone toward choosing our winners. There is still much to do to educate the world about the Holocaust. We just tried to shine a small light.

After reviewing all of the finalists' entries, I can say with confidence, that these kids get it. They will carry that light forward and pass it to the next generation.



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A symposium's impact



Local high school students take in the keynote address at the 2019 Student Symposium on the Holocaust at Mohawk College, an annual event organized by the Hamilton Jewish Federation.

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Jews have a duty to First Nations

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CIRCULATION
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EDITOR

Wendy Schneider
wschneider@jewishhamilton.org
905-628-0058

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Abigail Cukier

DIGITAL EDITOR

Ben Shragge

HJN CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Arnold, Steven Brock, Abigail Cukier, Ben Shragge, Phyllis Shragge

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Wade Hemsworth
Celia Rothenberg

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Teaching in the age of COVID-19

CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Teachers reflect on their first month of in-person and remote teaching during the pandemic school year

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

ON THE MORNING of Oct. 5, which marked Teachers Day in Canada, Mohawk College educator Alice Mendelson wrote the following words on her Facebook page: “Every day that I teach is possible because some other glorious person is teaching my four wonders. Every day, teachers take them in, celebrate who they are, and create islands of learning, of fun, of community—amidst stress, uncertainty and illness.”

Mendelson’s words ring particularly true at a time when teachers’ responsibilities now include making sure their students follow a myriad of new safety protocols, not to mention the challenge of wearing a mask for hours every day and concerns about their own health. Below are summaries of our conversations with elementary school teachers who are back in their classrooms this fall.

1. How did teachers feel about going back to school?
The simple answer is ‘concerned.’ Dora-Ann Cohen Ellison, who teaches kindergarten with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board said she was “a little apprehensive” about managing a play-based program with so many new protocols.

“Our kids are so little. Some are only three years old ... They touch everything,” she said.

A second concern for Cohen Ellison was for her family’s safety. “I am a teacher. My husband

works in a congregant living setting within the public sector and I have my own kids who go to Kehila. What happens if my own kids get sick, or if I get sick? And I am not talking just about COVID-19. Even if I get a regular cold, I can’t go to work.”

After cancelling all classes back in March, the Hamilton Hebrew Academy reopened its day-care program in July. Preschool teacher Joy Zians, who suffers from asthma, was nervous.

“I didn’t know what to expect,” she said. Putting all the new safety protocols in place was “a lot

of work,” she said, but what really put her mind to rest was seeing how well the children adapted. “The kids are so resilient. They just want to be loved.”

Bob Childs, a secular studies teacher at the HHA said his early concerns about returning to the classroom were eased by the administration’s consideration for staff safety.

“We had a lot of open Zoom meetings before we started. How we were going to run our classrooms ... what safety measures we would like to have ... so that we would feel safe, as well as the children in that environment,” he said.

Childs spent the opening weeks of school making sure his Grade 3 and 4 students understood and felt comfortable with new protocols, which included wearing masks at all times and using designated entrances, bathrooms, and a playground section assigned to their particular cohort.

“I think the Academy has done one excellent job,” said Childs. “I feel safer going into the classroom than I do going in to the grocery store because I know that everyone is focused on the proper way to do things.”

2. How are the kids doing?
Kehila Heschel Kindergarten

and Grade 1/2 teacher Linda Geva, said that, while getting used to the new protocols was overwhelming, staff and students have adjusted well to the new routines.

“It’s going great ... We wear face masks, wash our hands, use hand sanitizer. The kids listen to the rules and follow the rules. They go with the flow and adapt to whatever the situation is,” she said.

Cohen Ellison said her students have been “amazingly resilient and adapted so much more quickly and easily than even adults have.”

Of her Junior Kindergarten students, Zians says, “I think their emotional and social well-being is in good shape actually,” other than occasional incidents that reveal the underlying stress that children have absorbed simply by living through these unprecedented times. For example, one day during circle time, a child suddenly exclaimed, “Mrs. Zians, she’s too close to me.” Zians responded calmly and asked the second child to move over.

“When you lend your calm to someone, then they lend their calm to someone and it’s a trickle down effect. Then everybody’s in a better space,” said Zians. Shauna Eisenberg teaches Kindergarten and Grade 8 at

an inner city school. While her Kindergarten students have adapted well to her school’s new protocols, the situation is more complex with her older students. “A lot of them are struggling. They’re happy to be back but they’re really frustrated by a lot of the rules,” she said, especially those that stipulate staying within a confined area during recess. “This is their outdoor time. It’s a concrete square they’re allowed in. They can’t talk to their friends in other classes and there’s very little space to run and play.” For the most part, however, Eisenberg said her students are doing much better than she had feared.

“I was really nervous about coming back and what kind of state the kids were in and I’ve been really amazed at how well most of them are doing.”

The challenges in education this fall are difficult for everyone, but special education students are especially vulnerable. These students may be more overlooked than usual because of new demands placed on teachers during the pandemic and the need for a well-established resource team has never been more important, said Ali Ostrowski,

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



Hamilton Hebrew Academy Grade 4 students and teacher Bob Childs have adapted well to new COVID-19 protocols.



Kehila Heschel Grade 5 students sit socially distanced from one another.

Right and far right: Kehila students maintain a safe distance from one another in both structured and unstructured learning activities.



coordinator of the HHA's Student Success Centre. When the HHA suspended classes last March, Ostrowski continued working with her students online, a transition her students adapted to easily.

"So many kids did so well online," she said. "We were able to leverage their strengths and their focus." Ostrowski now works with students separated by a plexiglass divider an average of 20 minutes at a time three to five times a week. Teachers regularly tell her how students return to class more calm and confident after working with her.

That's not to say that all students are sailing through this COVID-19 period. Ostrowski, whose additional responsibilities include screening students as they come into the building every morning, has observed that children with a propensity towards anxiety are having a hard time.

But Ostrowski has also observed something positive during her morning routine.

"Because of COVID, we have a system of rules ... and a consistency," she said, that is having an impact on how students see themselves. "We are rule followers! I have a routine. I sanitize my hands. I answer the questions. I

follow the green line to go to my class ... the overarching system ... is regimented and structured and I think it's something the children ... are really benefitting from and really responding to."

3. Challenges faced by teachers and their students

Demands on teachers have increased significantly since the start of the pandemic. In addition to making sure students are wearing their masks, washing their hands and keeping a safe distance from one another, teachers in the Jewish day schools are facing the demand of simultaneously teaching in-person and to children joining in on Zoom from their homes.

For teachers like Dora-Ann Cohen Ellison, the start of the school year, also meant losing her childcare options.

"The first couple of weeks were tricky," she told the HJN. "Everyone in my house got sick at different times, with colds. And because we are not seeing grandparents right now, we couldn't just call and say, 'Can you come watch them for the day while I go to work?' It's difficult because our support system is not there."

When it comes to challenges students are facing, Shauna Eisenberg noticed her Grade 8

students struggling to stay awake after lunch at the beginning of the school year.

"I'm just amazed at how exhausted they are. It's definitely been a tough transition getting back for them as far as energy and sleep goes," she said.

4. The best thing about being back in school

While many teachers spent the summer months feeling anxious about returning to the classroom, Shauna Eisenberg's anxiety was focused on her students' well-being. That's because she knew that many of them relied on the daily healthy snacks, lunches and weekly bags of groceries provided by her school's nutrition program.

To Eisenberg, the best part of being back is "just seeing all the kids ... knowing that they're safe and being fed and doing okay and if they're not doing okay, I can be there to support them."

Eisenberg's deep commitment to her profession was echoed by all the teachers interviewed for this story, including HHA teacher Bob Childs, who perhaps spoke for everyone when he said, "Teaching is almost a mission for me right now."

The post-secondary situation

BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Alice Mendelson "... I feel like I'm not able to reach out to many of the students in a real and meaningful way ..."

Celia Rothenberg "... but it's absolutely unsatisfying. It's like running a course on autopilot."

AS SHE WAS preparing an introduction to her online course this fall, Mohawk College educator Alice Mendelson included the following note to her students.

The course is the course, she wrote to them, "but your well-being is what's important to me so feel free to reach out."

Mohawk College's Career Pathway Program, where Mendelson teaches, is designed specifically for students with a learning disability, autism or mental health challenges who want to develop academic and career-ready skills for future post-secondary study and employment.

The HJN reached out to Mendelson in early October to find out how things were going.

"From the students' perspective, I actually think they feel really comfortable because they don't have the added pressure of having to take public transportation to get to Mohawk, so they've been really happy and engaged," she said. "From my perspective, I feel like I'm not able to reach out to many of the students in a real and meaningful way because so much of what we do is that personal connection. So, all of these years that we've spent dedicating ourselves to this job that we love that makes it exciting to get up every day, that's not what we're doing anymore. But I think the same can be said for everyone who's doing something that they didn't sign up to do."

What is she doing that she sign up for?

"It's definitely not teaching. It's trying to connect with someone over a computer, which is just really challenging. You're not there. You're not beside them. There's no space for you to meet with them, in the hall, outside of class, before class."

Since the start of the school year, Mendelson is spending six hours a day teaching online. As hard as she works to keep the students engaged, the playing field is uneven. Many of her students are working from a shared bedroom or communal space using old technology or unstable Wi-Fi connections that prevent them from fully engaging with her or the course material.

"They're already vulnerable from the get go, and then you put them in this situation. So from a teaching perspective, it's just so disheartening when you see that kind of inequity play out."

MCMMASTER UNIVERSITY professor Celia Rothenberg spent her summer learning the technology that would allow her to record and upload lectures for the second-year undergraduate course she's teaching on Spirits, Ghosts, and Demons. The 180 students enrolled in the course listen to lectures according to their own schedules and are required to check in weekly for either online quizzes or discussions. With 22 years of teaching experience, Rothenberg knows how to time her lectures to fill a 50-minute time slot, so she was quite surprised to discover that she could record a lecture in a fraction of the time.

"Somehow, (recording the lecture in advance) is so much less fueling for the creativity process that I just don't think of the same connections to make, whether it's to ongoing events in the world or to material we already discussed. My pretty well-timed 45-minute lectures are now taking 15 minutes."

Another thing that adds to the feeling of disconnection is the phenomenon of online office hours. Rothenberg and her teaching assistants alternate waiting in an empty Zoom room for a student to come and talk to them.

"Not one of us has had a student come yet. We just finished week four," she said.

"I've had two quizzes. Those would (normally) get students coming in and there'd be a huge amount of interaction with students before and after class. So not one of us has had a single student come for Zoom office hours. Very strange. Very disconnected."

Does it worry her?

"I'm not really very worried, no. but it's absolutely unsatisfying. It's like running a course on autopilot."

The other course Rothenberg is teaching this semester is a Zoom seminar for fourth-year students, during which two, sometimes three of the six students enrolled, keep their cameras off.

"Between keeping the camera off and being muted, it means that the conversation is very stilted," said Rothenberg. "Without being able to read body language, it's hard for me to gauge engagement, comprehension. It's much more opaque than in person."



Opposite and below: Kehila Heschel students in their new socially distanced classrooms. "The more you do it, it becomes the norm," said teacher Linda Geva. "But it is completely different to what it was before."



A practical guide for this winter

Don't let it beat you down, lighten up and follow at least a few of these steps to warm your heart and lighten the load

BY **GABRIELE MCSWEEN AND ALEXIS WENZOWSKI**
HAMILTON JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

"It can't beat us!" Pa said.
"Can't it, Pa?" Laura asked stupidly.
"No," said Pa. "It's got to quit sometime and we don't. It can't lick us. We won't give up."
Then Laura felt a warmth inside her. It was very small but it was strong. It was steady, like a tiny light in the dark, and it burned very low but no winds could make it flicker because it would not give up."
LAURA INGALLS WILDER IN THE LONG WINTER

HAPPY CHANUKAH, Hamilton! As you light the menorah this year, consider the light that you are able to bring into your life and into other's. It's been a strange year. Light matters more than ever.

As we go through winter, and while we are in the midst of a seemingly never-ending pandemic, it is important to have your tools ready to help you with your mental wellness. These tools will be your light.

Pandemic aside, every year, two to three per cent of Canadians have seasonal affective disorder. Many others suffer from those winter blues periodically, and CMHA puts the number of sufferers at 18 per cent.

At a time when 11 to 13 million Canadians are under stress from the pandemic, the risk of having those winter blues or something more severe seems unavoidable. The point is to plan ahead, so that if you start to feel down, you have a path forward. Some

easy ways to help you add light to your life include the following:

Establish positive affirmations

Affirmations can 'trick' our brains into seeing a new perspective, when practised over time. Some examples include, "I live in the present moment" or "Today I am strong and brave."

Develop a daily routine

While it may seem easy to snuggle back into bed, or lie on the couch and binge watch Netflix, having purposeful tasks, along with a schedule makes a difference. As humans, we thrive on routine.

Try some light therapy

There are certain types of light out there which are thought to be effective in treating SAD and the winter blues. According to the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario, light therapy is effective in 70 per cent of cases.

Create a coping kit

This is a box tucked away that you only break out when you feel upset, low, or anxious. Common items to include things like lavender essential oil, a hard candy, some puzzles, some delicious tea, a copy of your favourite DVD or book, and a picture that makes you smile. These kits help to "reset" your mood when you're feeling down.

Make a gratitude list

Sometimes it can be hard to feel thankful about anything. We get it. And yet, in those moments, it is extra important to find gratitude. My recent gratitude list included: "I am thankful



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HJN

Getting outside, even in the cold, allows us to reconnect with nature, break away from the digital world, and boost focus and creativity.

for my home, my family, the recent parking ticket that reminded me to not cut corners," etc.

Get moving

Even if it's cold, find a way to get moving. This could include shoveling, dancing to your favourite song played loudly, or lifting soup cans (yes, this exists.)

Talk to your healthcare provider

If you know that winter is a difficult time for you, reach out to your family physician or therapist to discuss options. Sometimes these options can include counselling appointments, medication, or lifestyle changes.

Develop a thoughtful time

This can be used in prayer, meditation, or thought. This should be a time free of distractions. Start off small — even five minutes per day can make a difference! This time will help to anchor you through difficulties.

Practise patience

Patience is part of living in the now. Everything changes. Sometimes when feeling fully frustrated with how

things are going, say to yourself, "And this too will pass."

AT HAMILTON JEWISH Family Services, we have seen the impact of the pandemic on people. Our clients report challenges like insomnia, increased irritation, increased tearfulness, feelings of isolation, and more. These are tough times.

Through individual counselling, groups, and public education, we empower people to make changes, and develop their own wellness tools. We believe in helping people navigate life, and in helping every winter feel less long. Don't forget, life is teaching us many lessons. The pandemic is just one. To grow and to develop as a person, you need to willingly move out of your comfort zone into places where the unexpected can happen. Try to accept the pandemic as an individual growth for you: Live and learn and become wise.

If you are interested in learning more about HJFS Mental Health Services, or in accessing these supports, please connect with Gabriele at gabrielem@hamiltonjfs.ca

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Encountering Auschwitz

Polish scholar invited to share his virtual tour of the death camp to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

YOLANDA CZYZEWSKI-BRAGUES has visited Auschwitz more times than she can count, but was completely mesmerized recently by a virtual tour of the concentration camp created by Polish tour guide Jerzy Wójcik.

Czyzewski-Bragues is a member of Hamilton Jewish Federation's International Holocaust Remembrance Committee and her grandfather spent three years in Auschwitz as a political prisoner. Wójcik grew up in the town where the concentration camp is located. Neither Czyzewski-Bragues or Wójcik are Jewish, but they share

a passion for Holocaust education. And now, the Hamilton Jewish Federation has invited Wójcik to offer his Auschwitz virtual tour as part of its International Holocaust Remembrance Day commemoration on Sunday, Jan. 24, 2021.

An academic whose area of focus is the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Wójcik had been guiding tours of Auschwitz-Birkenau for 14 years when the coronavirus pandemic put a temporary halt to his activities last spring. He took advantage of his forced hiatus by creating what he believes is a first-of-its kind virtual, interactive tour of the concentration camp using a combination of pre-existing

digital resources, including the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum's virtual reality panorama, archival historical footage, and recordings from drone flights, all of which form the backdrop to Wójcik's commentary. The result is a powerful educational tool that is teaching the lessons of the Holocaust to a much wider audience than he normally would have reached.

"My goal is to take the knowledge that I have and the message of Auschwitz everywhere," he said. "We have to understand what political process led the Germans to choose Hitler. Because once they get to the point of 1943, 1944, this was an

irreversible point in history. They could not go back from this."

Since launching his project last August, Wójcik has conducted close to 20 tours to student groups, educators, and the general public from Australia, Europe, Scandinavia and the U.S., as well as a session attended by 250 students from India. His tours are interactive and participants



Jerzy Wójcik guides viewers on a virtual tour of Auschwitz.

are encouraged to ask questions. During one tour, Wójcik learned that a woman who had survived Auschwitz was among the participants and asked her to share her story.

"I tell people at the beginning of the visit, 'it's not going to be comfortable. It's not going to be short,'" said Wójcik. "When you go to Auschwitz physically, it's emotionally difficult and physically uncomfortable. This is not going to be any different."

Wójcik will be offering two Auschwitz virtual tours on Jan. 24. For more information, visit the Hamilton Jewish Federation website at jewishhamilton.org.

Holocaust education initiatives honour memory of beloved family members

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION has the potential to be transformative—by inspiring students to think critically about the past and reflect on their own roles and responsibilities today. That is why the Hamilton Jewish Federation is so dedicated to educating the public about the ultimate consequences of hate and intolerance. Last year, Federation's Holocaust Education programming received a significant boost through a generous gift from Margaret's Legacy and two families who share a connection to Hamilton's Jewish community.

A central part of Federation's annual Student Symposium on the Holocaust at Mohawk College is the presentation of the Sharon Enkin Award for Excellence in Holocaust Education to local teachers who have demonstrated a commitment to teaching students about the Holocaust and its important lessons. Toronto-based philanthropist Larry Enkin created the award in 2011 in memory of his wife, Sharon, whose lifelong involvement with education and community affected the lives of thousands of students.

In 2019, the family decided to fund an additional award (see editorial on page 2) to recognize

students' understanding of the lessons of the Holocaust. The winners of the inaugural Sharon Enkin Student Award were announced at the beginning of December.

Another one of Federation's signature programs is its annual teacher's seminar on the Holocaust, which was endowed last year by a generous gift from former Hamilton residents Gale Halpern and Peter Jacobs in memory of their parents. Erwin and Lore Jacobs were young teens when they fled Germany for the UK right before the Second World War, only to see most of their family members murdered by the

Nazis. After the war, the couple eventually settled in Hamilton and raised their family. In 1990, Erwin applied for compensation for the loss of his family's factory, which was confiscated by the Nazis on the eve of the Second World War. His death in 1996 set off years of bureaucratic wrangling over the question of rightful heirs. When the restitution payment finally came through in February 2019, shortly before Lore's death, the siblings decided to add to the modest Holocaust Education fund their father had set up years earlier with the Hamilton Jewish Federation.

"It was a very sad situation for us because this money was so tied to the history of what happened to my grandparents," said Halpern.

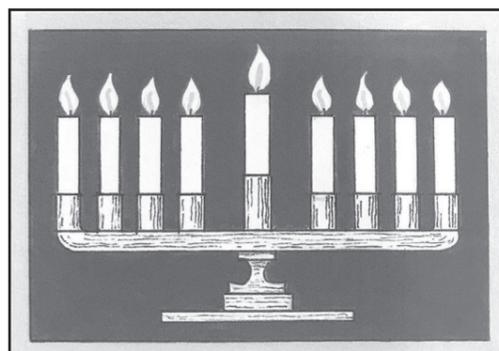
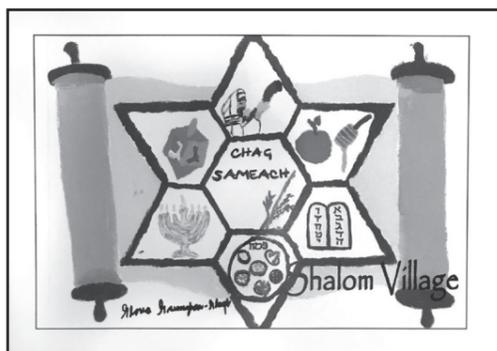
"We thought that the best thing to do would be to memorialize our parents whose lives had become much better and stable."

The inaugural Lore and Erwin Jacobs Holocaust Education Teacher's Seminar took place on Zoom on Dec. 2. Offered as a free event to teachers, principals and trustees from both the public and Catholic Hamilton school boards, the event featured a keynote address by author Jennifer Teege and a virtual appearance by Gale Halpern and Peter Jacobs, who brought greetings on behalf of the family. "We thought our parents would be really pleased that it was happening," said Halpern. "It's looking towards the future while recognizing the past."



This year, let Shalom Village help you stay connected to your friends and loved ones. Shalom Village Tribute Cards are a great way to support our seniors, and remind people you've been unable to see, that you're thinking of them.

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YOU can join the Shalom Village family in making Chanukah happy for everyone. Your gift can help us spread light and laughter by making a donation to our 4th Annual Snowflake Appeal!

This year, our "modified" Snowflake appeal will be adjusted to comply with COVID protocols, but we will still be displaying snowflakes, with donor names for our residents. Our seniors are some of the hardest hit by pandemic restrictions, so please help us make their days brighter and warmer by making your Snowflake Gift today! Visit ShalomVillage.ca and click on the Give Today link to donate your snowflakes.

Remember Shalom Village for your year-end giving. When you give by Dec. 31, 2020, your gift will also be tax deductible.

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Jerzy Wójcik was born in the town of Oswiecim (Auschwitz), Poland. He is a graduate of International Relations at the Faculty of Political and International Studies, and of postgraduate studies on the Middle and Far East at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

In 2010, he was awarded a PhD in the field of political science at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. He is a recipient of a scholarship from Florentyna Kogutowska Fund at the Jagiellonian University and a scholarship from the State of Israel for a nine-month internship at the University of Tel Aviv. For a number of years, he has been working with several organizations and institutions in Poland, among others, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and Center for Holocaust Studies in Krakow, Center for International Relations in Warsaw, European Association of Israel Studies. Since 2015 he has run the Holocaust Memorial Partnership. He has been to Israel more than 20 times.

When the question is being asked, what would such an on-line Auschwitz Virtual Tour be like, I answer it in one way:

"The Virtual Tour around Auschwitz is a faithful and precise representation of an in-person visit to the Auschwitz Memorial Site. However, thanks to audio-visual techniques, we can significantly deepen this experience by using historical recordings and aerial videos. What is most important, however, is the fact that the educator (myself) can, at any time, answer the student's question and present a much deeper explanation. In this online system the educator always works live with the students. **The most important thing remains unchanged: The NARRATIVE.**

This is something that I have been doing for the last 14 years."

Dr. Jerzy Wójcik

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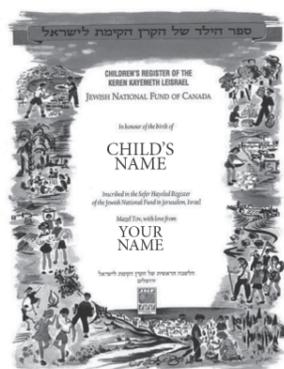
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Dancing in the rain: Shifting expectations in the time of COVID



Milena Romalis and Rina Rodak

WE ARE WRITING IN the last week of October, as the world holds its breath. There are a lot of uncertainties this fall—more than we have ever faced globally, at least within our lifetimes.

As a collective, we have been facing these unknowns for eight long months, since the initial school closures. It's widely understood that this period has been particularly hard on families or individuals who rely on outside supports. Therapeutic services, respite, community centres, places of worship, and visits from grandparents all ceased to be, and have resumed slowly and insufficiently, if at all. Family members who are caring for children or adults with significant needs have been working around the clock without stabilizing, outside help.

The long quarantine has affected each family differently. But as humans, we all seek solace, security, consistency, rhythm, connection. We are innately social; we move through the hard days by anticipating the milestone events and the community gatherings and the intimacy of our friends' quiet presences. Social media and Zoom are poor substitutes for hugs, cuddles, and high fives. So now, we collectively grieve. We grieve the loss of normalcy, the loss of predictability, and the loss of anticipation.

Family and personal challenges are often a messy and complicated affair, where hopes and fantasies collide with the unanticipated, the unwanted, and the less than ideal. Our families are experts in the domain of grief, loss, unpredictable circumstances, days full of the unexpected and the disappointing. In this realm, there is no choice but to shift expectations to the achievable rather than the desirable or comfortable.

At NowWhat? Supports, we work in the domain of human and family well-being, with a broad range of people, from young children to adults. This includes both those with diagnoses and those without,

but all who are struggling with a myriad of challenges, such as runaway anxiety, unharnessed attention, or emotional dysregulation.

Last spring, against the backdrop of the pandemic, we shifted and our NowWhat? families shifted with us. We had no choice. Our office moved to the inside of a suburban garage and our clinic became a backyard canopy. Our therapists and families waded through mud, baked in the sun, masked on steaming hot days, tolerated mosquito bites and cold nights and found a way to connect and grow despite the less than ideal circumstances.

This fall, we shifted again! We moved into a new clinic with expansive indoor and outdoor spaces. We dug up masses of mud in order to put in a radiant heating system under our outdoor canopies. Hands get cold, feet get wet, and snow will inevitably invade our senses. We will adapt and overcome.

Our families have continued to shift with us, making concessions, tolerating inconvenience in the name of crucial in-person connection. We're masking and sanitizing madly, donning smocks, changing clothes. We bundle up outside and stockpile mittens. And some days, we literally dance in the rain.

The irony is that families who are accustomed to finding ways around, over and through the obstacles are already quite expert in this situation. And in some ways, have struggled less than others to accept the new realities. For some, there has even been a silver lining in the flexibility, low demands and privacy that COVID-19 protocols have allowed.

This has been a time of biblical-level tests and transitions. It's been an incredible exercise in both acceptance and non-acceptance. But for those living with mental health challenges and other obstacles, straddling the line between acceptance and non-acceptance is a way of life.

Those who are experts at dancing in the rain and making the best of the less-than-ideal, serve as a light in the darkness.

We wish all a happy Chanukah. May we all find our joy in the unexpected, shift our expectations to the attainable, and accept that less than ideal can become enough.

Milena Romalis and Rina Rodak are the founders and co-directors of NowWhat? Supports, a comprehensive therapeutic clinic that provides creative, wraparound supports at every stage of life.

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Canada's Mountain Jews

Neither Ashkenazi nor Sephardi, this tenacious Jewish community has roots in the Caucasus going back more than a thousand years

BY **BEN SHRAGGE**
SPECIAL TO HJN

STRADDLING EUROPE and Asia, the Caucasus lies at the crossroads of the traditionally Christian and Muslim worlds. The North Caucasus, while part of majority Orthodox Christian Russia, is largely Sunni Muslim. The South Caucasus, which borders Turkey and Iran, consists of the independent post-Soviet states of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, and includes some of the world's most ancient Christian communities.

Yet the Caucasus has also been home to a tenacious Jewish minority for well over a millennium. The Mountain Jews (also known as Gorsky, from the Russian word for "mountain," or Kavkazi, from the Hebrew word for "Caucasus") likely originate from Jews who moved to the Caucasus Mountains from Persia, since their traditional language is related to Persian. Neither Ashkenazi or Sephardic (though they follow the Sephardic rite), Mountain Jews have maintained their own unique identity under the rule of Persians, Turks, and most recently, Russians.

Today, the majority of the world's estimated 200,000 Mountain Jews live in Israel, having left the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union; though an entirely Jewish town called Krasnaya Sloboda ("the Jerusalem of the Caucasus") still exists in Azerbaijan. Most North American Mountain Jews live in New York City, but Toronto is home to a



PHOTO CREDIT: GSR STUDIO INC.

vibrant community as well.

According to Tehila Nissanova, Co-President of the Women's Council for Toronto's Jewish Caucasus Community Centre, there are approximately 450 Mountain Jewish families in Toronto, or about 2,000 individuals. In addition, there may be about 20 Mountain Jews in Montreal, and 10 to 20 in other parts of Canada. Religiously, she says, most identify as Orthodox or traditional.

"Mountain Jews started to immigrate to Canada in the mid 1980s from Israel," Nissanova recounts. "Mass emigration from the former Soviet Union started in 1991 during its collapse. About half of the Mountain Jewish diaspora is from Azerbaijan (specifically, the cities of Baku, Kuba, and Qusar). A quarter were residents of Derbent (Dagestan) and the remainder were residents

of different towns in Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Chechnya, and Stavropol Krai [all part of the Russian North Caucasus].

"Approximately five to seven per cent of Mountain Jews arrived in Toronto directly from the former Soviet Union. The remainder came to Toronto from Israel."

The ancestral Mountain Jewish language was commonly called "Tat" during the Soviet era, after a similar language spoken by a neighboring Muslim people. However, today the community prefers the term "Juhuro," which, like "Yiddish," literally means "Jewish."

"All Mountain Jews, except for the youth, speak Russian and Juhuro," says Nissanova. "Juhuro is the oral language of Mountain Jews, based on elements of Hebrew and Farsi. The ancestors of Mountain Jews, during the Assyrian captivity, went from

The 2007 International Children's Talent Show at Leah Posluns Theatre in Toronto featured a Mountain Jewish performance.

attempted to find employment. Of course, former teachers, doctors, and engineers did not have the opportunity to work in their profession, as it would take many years of education to receive a Canadian licence."

Nissanova describes the global Mountain Jewish diaspora as closely connected through stmegi.com, the online hub of the Moscow-based STMEGI cultural foundation. Canadian Mountain Jews attend celebrations and conferences in Israel, Russia, and the US, including the annual Community Day in Brooklyn.

In 2007, the Toronto community hosted a charity event called the International Children's Talent Show, which featured the Canadian debut of New York's Kavkaz dance troupe. The community has also participated in local festivals with its own children's troupe, which performs folk dances like the Lezginka, and held a seminar and culinary workshop with the Toronto UJA Federation.

Canada's Mountain Jews form a unique and culturally rich part of the country's broader Russian-speaking, Israeli, and Canadian Jewish communities. They are dedicated to passing on their Jewish and Caucasus traditions to the next generation, and eager to share their stories with the world.

Special thanks to Yelena Shragge for assistance with Russian translation. Read more about Canada's Mountain Jews in Tehila Nissanova's Russian-language book Jewish Gorsky Community of Toronto, which includes sections translated into English.

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The death by fire of Bill Leuchter

Some are remembered for how they lived. Others by how they died

BY HARVEY STARKMAN
SPECIAL TO HJN

I wonder how people looked at him as he drove along York Street in his black, slick-backed V-8 coupe. He was 26, round-faced and curly haired. Did the girls find him attractive? Maybe a little dangerous? He certainly had a dangerous nickname — Bill “the Butcher” Leuchter, which he came by somewhat honestly.

But the real butcher in the Leuchter family was Bill’s father, Ignatz. He had started the Hamilton Kosher Meat Market in 1929, and, as in family businesses everywhere, all five of his children were involved in some way at some time. I prefer another nickname that I’ve seen only once — Bill “the Butcher Boy.” It’s closer to the truth.

In November 1938, Leuchter was working for the notorious bootlegger, Rocco Perri. By then, the best of Perri’s days were behind him. In 1930, Bessie Starkman, Perri’s common-law wife and business partner (some say the brains and driving force behind their lucrative operation) had been gunned down, and he himself was a man marked for death. A bomb blast had recently destroyed the front of his Bay Street South home. A few years later, Rocco Perri would go for a walk and quite literally disappear into legend.

Bootlegging had probably reached its height of profitability towards the end of the 1920s, and Prohibition was finally repealed in 1933. Some bar and club owners



PHOTO COURTESY OF HARVEY STARKMAN
Bill Leuchter’s tombstone in Hamilton’s Ohev Zedek Cemetery.

still purchased cheaper bootlegged alcohol to boost their bottom line, but by 1938 it was getting harder for their suppliers to maintain their own profits by relying on alcohol sales alone.

Now, to fuel a developing local market, ‘dope and alky cars’ transported alcohol south across the border and returned to Canada with illegal drugs stashed in special roof pockets.

Leuchter worked hard for the money he made. Paid by the trip, it seemed he was always on the road, running rum to Niagara Falls and Buffalo, Detroit, and as far away as Chicago. There is no evidence that he transported drugs.

Friends later said he had plans to quit the business altogether. Was he troubled by the changes? Did he see better prospects? Did

he have bigger dreams?

On the evening of Nov. 30, Bill and 23-year-old Mike Mikoda had passed Ann Arbor on the highway to Chicago, when his coupe, packed with more than 1,000 gallons of alcohol, struck a tractor trailer and exploded in flames.

Both men were incinerated. The inferno was so intense that police first on the scene could not tell if the occupants were men or women. And the confusion continued. When early news of the accident reached Hamilton, there was excited speculation that one of the bodies might be Rocco Perri’s.

Bill Leuchter is buried in the Ohev Zedek Cemetery on Hamilton Mountain. The cameo on his tombstone shows a serious man in formal wear who looks older than his years. His grave is located not far from Bessie Starkman’s.

Some people are remembered for how they lived their lives. Bill Leuchter entered history as a minor footnote in the bigger story of Prohibition, whisky barons, bootleggers, and the growth and consolidation of organized crime families. He is remembered more for who he wasn’t and for the horrible way he died than for who he was and how he lived.

When I think about Bill Leuchter, I think of a young man with his life ahead of him, a young man who died a fiery death on a dark road, at a dark time of the year, not so many months before the shells and the blasting bombs of war would once again explode and spark fires the world over.

In those days and at this time



Miriam Sager

OVER THE AGES, Chanukah has lent itself to various interpretations, and even the historical facts are not entirely clear. However, we know that the Hebrews lost their religious rights and control of their temple for some time, and then got them back. When I was growing up in the Israeli public school system, the emphasis was on the attempt at forced assimilation as well as the victory of the freedom fighters. On both counts, I cannot but think of the parallels between colonization in antiquity and in modern times.

In October, the Haldimand County police services board called on the Ontario Provincial Police to take action against what it called “acts of terrorism” committed by Haudenosaunee land defenders who have halted a housing development in Caledonia.

Looking back on our own history in today’s terms, the Hashmonaim, more commonly known as the Maccabees, with their guerilla tactics, would no doubt be hunted down as terrorists. But unlike that armed revolt, the Haudenosaunee land defenders have been non-violent. It is the OPP that has used violence against them.

Taking over land and other natural resources, through whatever means required, is a hallmark of colonization. On Turtle Island (the Indigenous name for North

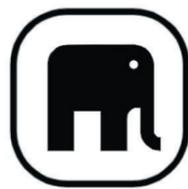
America), the signing of treaties with no intention of keeping them was considered acceptable against people who were considered “savages.” To this day, despite the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Canada’s commitment to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Canadian authorities continue to ignore Indigenous sovereignty. They repeatedly take drastic actions affecting Indigenous land, water and holy sites without obtaining the required free, prior and informed consent. Land claims are being dragged through the courts endlessly.

Forced assimilation, often in partnership with the churches, has been one such colonial tactic. If you can “take the Indian out of the child,” there will be no one left to resist.

Legal and violent measures were used to prevent spiritual and social practices, including use of Indigenous languages; children were punished and tortured for speaking their mother tongue. As Jews who have fought to reclaim Hebrew, we may have a glimmer of the enormity of this hurt. And of course, the massive, violent residential school project that removed children from their communities, traumatizing not only the children, but their parents and communities too, resulted in widespread and long-lasting inter-generational trauma.

Canada has apologized to survivors of the residential schools, and some provinces have

CONTINUES NEXT PAGE



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Teaching in the North

Motivated by her desire for a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture, one woman journeyed out of her comfort zone to a northern community

BY **BARRY ROSEN**
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

“A life changing experience,” was how Alexis Wenzowski described her experience as a teacher in Northern Saskatchewan.

From August 2009 to March 2014, Wenzowski, who is now director of Hamilton Jewish Family Services, lived and worked in Stanley Mission, a reservation and hamlet of 1,800 people, located about 500 kilometres north of Saskatoon. While she had her own car, driving was a challenge as the roads were unpaved. Winters, which usually began in October, were severe.

Wenzowski was motivated by her desire for a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture and her interest in social change. She took the position in order to make a difference and to learn more about herself. She was also ready for the challenges of a new adventure. She taught Grade 7-12. While she hadn't expected to teach subjects such as girls' gym,

her attitude was “you just do it.”

While the first year was challenging, Wenzowski did go on to establish trusting relationships with her students. She asked them to call her Alexis rather than Ms. Wenzowski, as she quickly understood the different social norms in the North. She shared her home phone number with her students in case they had questions, so she was therefore on duty 24/7.

Wenzowski took her students on youth leadership trips and established several new programs and learned first-hand that “Canada could do better” in terms of its relationship with Indigenous people.

This problematic relationship resulted in many social problems in the community. A major issue was the after effects of trauma due to residential schools. In addition, there was crowded housing, acute poverty, addictions and mental health. She described instances in which the RCMP did not deal with situations appropriately.



A 2013 photo of an Idle No More protest concerning land and water issues in the northern Saskatchewan Indigenous community of Stanley Mission.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEXIS WENZOWSKI

She also questioned why Northern communities such as Stanley Mission are sometimes under “boil water advisories,” have extended periods in which they lack electricity and have poor mental health resources.

During her time in Stanley Mission, local residents invited her to come to their trap lines, the route along where trappers set their traps, which she considered an honour. She also took part in activities which she had never done before, such as fishing and kayaking. She was willing to “go out of my comfort zone.”

After interviewing Wenzowski, I feel she sees the best in people and has faith in the capacity of community members to help one another. She brought these qualities to her work in Stanley Mission and to her current work within the Hamilton Jewish community. Wenzowski was open and generous in sharing her northern experiences with me. Should you have the opportunity to attend any of her talks on the subject, I highly recommend that you do so.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

apologized for the theft of children from their communities that followed. But just as residential schools were being shut down, “child protection” services began a massive removal of children from their homes, communities and cultures, between 1955 and 1989, to be adopted by non-Indigenous parents and even outside of Canada.

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies has even acknowledged that the “Sixties Scoop,” and many current practices have resulted in cultural genocide for the Indigenous people of Ontario. Despite these apologies, Indigenous children are still being removed from their communities at alarming rates. Instead of supporting traumatized and impoverished Indigenous parents and communities, children are removed and money is poured into the foster system. There are few cultural supports for these young people, who lose their identity and are lost to their communities.

As I write this, I am sadly confident that my ruminations on the fight against colonization will still be relevant at Chanukah time. In Caledonia, it is Six Nations that are defending their land; in B.C., the Wet'suwet'en are resisting a Canada-owned pipeline expansion that will go under their water sources, destroying pristine, unceded territory, homes, and sacred sites.

In Halifax, the Mi'kmaq fishermen are left to fend for themselves while they and their traditional — and legally recognized — fishing rights are under attack. These are just a few of the current struggles for Indigenous rights.

At this time of year, as we celebrate our freedoms, let us consider what our government is still doing to those who have cared for the land which we inhabit.

Miriam Sager works with others to stop climate change, and leads listening circles.

Virtual Jewish book and film festivals exceed expectations

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

When the coronavirus pandemic arrived in Hamilton last March, the Hamilton Jewish Federation cancelled a number of scheduled spring programs, including its inaugural Hamilton Jewish Film Festival, a partnership with the Westdale Cinema.

When organizers decided to reschedule the festival for the end of August as a virtual event, they had no idea whether they'd be able to recoup the costs of purchasing screening rights to its three international films. But the festival's success exceeded all of their

expectations, with brisk ticket sales from viewers both within and outside the Greater Hamilton Area and high attendance at its moderated live Q&As with film directors and expert panelists.

Based on the success of the film festival, Federation decided to hold the second annual Marvin Caplan Jewish Book Festival and Holocaust Education Week virtually during the first two weeks of November. Nine authors from across the United States and Canada, some of whom would likely never have made it to Hamilton for an in-person event, presented their books during discussions with local and celebrity



Author **Kathy Kacer** discusses her book, *The Brushmaker's Daughter* with local moderator, **Dennis Nash**

moderators that allowed for questions from viewers.

Judi Caplan, in whose husband's name the festival is named, said in a pre-recorded video introduction that she couldn't have imagined a year ago that the festival she founded would go virtual a year after its founding. Nevertheless,

feedback from the event was universally positive.

“I really enjoyed the session,” wrote children's author Kathy Kacer to Federation organizers. “I thought that Dennis (Nash's) questions were wonderful, and the questions from the audience were also so important.”

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Jewish National Fund

JNF CANADA OFFICE

WHEN THE WORLD reopens and travelling to Israel becomes a possibility once more, don't miss seeing the Books of Honour at the headquarters of Keren Kayemeth LeYisrael (KKL) in Jerusalem.

Information about hundreds of thousands of Jewish National Fund donors has been preserved in Honour Books, dating back to 1901, when the Jewish National Fund was created in Basel, Switzerland. More significantly, the Honour Books contain important historical information, as many of the entries are pre-Holocaust, representing a treasure chest of information and a unique source for historians, genealogists, or people searching for information about their ancestors.

The original seven Honour Books — the JNF Golden Book, the Children's Book, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Book, the Marriage Book, the Book of Plantings, the Book of Special Gifts and the Aliyah Book — together constitute an expression of the tie between the Jewish Diaspora and the land of Israel.

Because these records go back so many years, they can provide the missing link in a family lineage by noting the benefactor of the inscription. Each inscription includes the name of the honouree, together with the names of the donors, the date and the occasion.

Not only do these books symbolize the dedication of a specific occasion like a bar mitzvah or birth, but they also act as a lasting record of family history. In one case, a family found a bar mitzvah dedication for their grandfather who had perished in the Holocaust. Through the book, they were able to retrace their family genealogy, which had all but been lost in Europe.

The Golden Book was created by Dr. Theodor Herzl to commemorate the



PHOTO COURTESY OF JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

Visitors to KKL-JNF's head office in Jerusalem view the Books of Honour

delegates at the Fifth Zionist Congress that voted for and raised funds for the establishment of JNF. Its pages are filled with thousands of names, including those of kings, presidents, and statesmen from many nations such as Lord Balfour, Sir Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Professor Zvi Schapira, David Wolfsohn, and Moses Montefiore as well as Jewish people around the world.

The Bar Mitzvah Books were initiated in 1936 and hold more than 100,000 names and photos of children commemorating their bar/bat mitzvahs, which may be the only surviving photos available of an individual who perished in the Holocaust.

Visitors to the Golden Book Hall, who come to see the names of ancestors, family or friends who have been honoured with an inscription, are astonished at the beauty of the books.

To have a name inscribed in one of these Books of Honour — perhaps a new baby, a bar or bat mitzvah, a milestone event, call our office at 905-527-5516. For more information call our office and we will arrange a visit for you while you are in Israel. Mark an occasion that both recognizes the importance of the event and immortalizes the milestone forever in Israel.

TAS Religious School

DORA-ANN COHEN ELLISON

STUDENTS AT Temple Anshe Sholom Religious School are meeting twice a week in our Zoom Classrooms. Our goal this year is to build classroom community and make connections to our greater Jewish community. Because our students have been provided with home packages of craft supplies and text materials, they are able to spend time in class creating and are given time to share their work with each other. Our Family Service is an opportunity for families to pray, as well as share with each other. As one of the most effective ways to learn a teaching is through action, students have engaged with members of our greater community, their actions reaching far beyond the walls of their own homes. Our junior students have learned about the many organizations that are supported by the Hamilton Jewish Federation and are planning a project of support for

the winter. Our senior students have reflected on how their actions influence those of others and are creating their own social action initiative to support the vulnerable in our community. Our primary students created Chanukah art and cards for the residents at Shalom Village, and our whole school will Zoom into Shalom Village for a Chanukah sing-along and virtual game session, together with the students at Beth Jacob. Though we may be more isolated, we need to create virtual moments for our students to build friendships, to engage with synagogue life and to participate in activities with the community, as if the walls are not there. Temple Anshe Sholom classes for JK-Grade 11 take place on Saturdays at 9:15 a.m. and Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m., with a free pre-school tot-Shabbat Saturday at 9 a.m. Please email Dora-Ann Cohen Ellison at dacellison@anshesholom.ca or visit anshesholom.ca/tas-religious-school.

Kehila Heschel

ANITA BERNSTEIN

AS EVERYONE is navigating 2020, this most unusual year, Kehila Heschel's integrated curriculum has supported its students to develop not only the traditional academic skills but increased its focus on personal growth skills of resilience, kindness, innovation, creativity, flexibility and problem solving. Through its Middot program, Kehila Heschel continued to emphasize Jewish values of building community, gratitude, supporting those in need, connecting with others and caring for the world.

Students are actively involved in their social action projects and feel empowered to be able to help others. This year's social action projects included tending our vegetable garden

and donating the produce to the food bank and sending holiday notes to residents of Shalom Village and others who have been isolated. As part of a warm clothing drive, students learn about those who are less fortunate than them and have no permanent home or family support. Some students are learning to knit and create scarfs to donate.

Grade 1 and 2 classes learned about their heritage by interviewing their grandparents and then exploring the world map to find the origin of their roots.

Although school may look different due to COVID-19 restrictions, our students are thriving as they learn to embrace indoor classrooms as a safe place and the outdoors as an amazing learning environment.

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



Jeffrey Manishen



Barry Yellin



Brad Wiseman



Ross & McBride LLP

1 King Street, 10th Floor
Hamilton, ON L8P 1A4

TEL: 905.526.9800

FAX: 905.526.0732

www.rossmcbride.com

Hamilton Jewish Family Services

ALEXIS WENZOWSKI

With the Greather Hamilton Area placed in the Red Zone, we encourage you to continue practising your own safety measures. We at HJFS, continue to be open to service needs and support the community; however, there are some changes. For as long as this period lasts, clients and visitors will not be permitted in our offices. If you are dropping something off, we will meet you in the lobby, and if you are visiting the Food Bank, hampers will be left outside our door. These precautions are meant to keep everyone safe.

We are proud to say that Hamilton Jewish Federation will be supporting the vulnerable with Chanukah bags this year. We are also delighted to announce that Adas Israel Sisterhood will be continuing its Baskets of Compassion initiative for Holocaust survivors. And, of note, the HHA has agreed to spearhead a Kosher Food Drive for Carol's Cupboard. To these organizations, and every organization and individual who supports HJFS, I deeply thank you. Your actions bring light at dark times.

Some more good news: HJFS has been welcomed into the Good Food Organizations Program. Our new friends include family health teams, urban farms, and other amazing organizations.

The Hamilton Jewish Federation recently received a grant to provide our community organizations with 75,000 face masks and 1,500 bottles of hand sanitizer. This will benefit our synagogues, agencies, and schools.

Our Virtual Bereavement Group wrapped up its first course and will keep meeting in the new year; Community donations have continued to come in. Thank you for the

donated produce, masks, scarves, underwear, socks, and more; Our November Zoom workshops on gender-based violence had fantastically engaged participants. We invite you to check out the upcoming ones at hamiltonjfs.ca. Donations to support our various initiatives, ranging from beautifully knit scarves to socks to delicious veggie produce, continue to come in, and we are incredibly grateful. Everything donated is put towards supporting those in need. Your generosity makes a difference. Thank you for being there for us. Thank you for being there for everyone. Be Safe. Be Kind.

McMaster Hillel

JUDITH DWORKIN

MCMMASTER HILLEL hosted its very first Shabbat in a Box program in October for more than 50 McMaster students. Students received a meal, candles, grape juice, challah, an insert of blessings and a mystery surprise of a banana and date, adding a unique tradition of the Bene Israel community of India.

Students gathered on Zoom before sundown to welcome in Shabbat and lead an inspiring gathering, proving that, while we may not be physically together, we can still feel connected to one another.



Mac student Jenna Bienstock delivers a Shabbat in a box package

Temple Anshe Sholom

RABBI JORDAN COHEN

THIS YEAR, in celebration of the Festival of Lights, Temple Anshe Sholom will offer a special event for each of the eight nights of Chanukah. These online celebrations will allow all Temple members and guests to not only connect with their Anshe Sholom community, but also other members of the Hamilton Jewish community, the Canadian Reform Jewish community and other Reform and Progressive Jews from around the world.

One of the highlights will certainly be the Global Virtual Chanukah Celebration sponsored by the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the world-wide body of the Reform Movement. Being presented on the fourth night, the production is being produced by the Tony Award winning team of Yael Silver and Carmine Entertainment and will feature an array of celebrity guests. Following the great success of our online nationwide Tikkun Leil Shavuot and S'lichot

programs, both of which were organized by Rabbi Cohen and Cantor Baruch, the Canadian Reform movement will again join together on the third night of Chanukah for a moving candle lighting service featuring rabbis, cantors and lay-leaders from across the land. The other nights will be filled in with Kabbalat Shabbat and Havdalah candle lightings, a YoFi Chanukah evening with Cantor Paula and a "Chanukah Chappy Hour" featuring a pub-style trivia competition and holiday nibbles you can make at home. One of the silver linings of the pandemic cloud has been the opportunity to join together across borders and time zones to celebrate, learn and worship through online programming. This Chanukah, we will be expanding our circle of community to spread the light across our city, nation and around the world. Everyone is welcome to participate. The links to access these and all other services and programs can be found at anshesholom.ca. Chag Urim Sameach to all.

Beth Jacob Synagogue

SHIRA KATES

FOLLOWING THE success of our pre-recorded High Holy Day and Simchat Torah services, Beth Jacob Synagogue invites you to tune in once again for Chanukah!

Prepare to join us online for special footage of your fellow congregants singing, dancing, cooking latkes, lighting their chanukiyot, playing dreidel, and sharing Chanukah greetings. We're sure you will feel the warmth of community from the comfort and safety of your own home.

We know that the pandemic has forced all of us to change and adapt our understanding of engagement, and that ideally we would be able to join together in person by now. However, Chanukah is a perfect time to remember the Jewish people's ability to triumph over adversity.

The pandemic continues for the moment, but we will continue to shine brightly and do our part to protect those around us while reaching out to you through Zoom and online activity.

Stay tuned to our weekly ChaiLites eblasts, website, and social media for more details about when and how to access the Chanukah production, or even to get involved. And, be sure to save the dates for other December programming from guest educators:

A three part series The Mitzvah Within: Living in the Image of God with Chaim Eliezer Davis; An action-packed Real Story of Chanukah with Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein; The Gender Lady: Dr. May Cohen documentary screening and Q&A with the directors, and Dr. Cohen herself; An exploration of Foundational Myths with Rabbi Natan Freller – what can unicorns and mermaids teach us about our faith today? and, Inner Flexibility: Yoga, Pranayama and Meditation returns! Learn yoga and more with Rabbi Yonah Lavery-Yisraeli.

We always look forward to connecting with you. Reach out at any time to shira@bethjacobsynagogue.ca. Chanukah Sameach, and talk to you soon!

Thinking of downsizing and feeling overwhelmed?
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The Hamilton Chapter wishes all our Donors,
Families & Friends a Warm and Festive

Chag Ha'Chanukah

HAMILTON CHAPTER
Debbie Strub, Chair
E: debbiestrub@gmail.com
Toll Free: 1-800-731-2848

Let us pray
for peace in our
beloved Israel
— Am Y'Israel Chai

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I am pleased to welcome Yves Apel and his team to the CIBC Wealth Management office of Hamilton.



Yves is an accomplished industry leader who has built a substantial and well respected practice in the GTHA. His passion for client care is unparalleled.

Yves is supported by a Private Banker, Financial Planner, Tax and Estate Planner, Insurance Specialist, Foreign exchange specialists, Commercial banking, Private company Transition and Investment Banking, Trust Services, and a Portfolio research group.

Welcome to the team Yves!

Tom Cosentino
Vice President and Branch Manager
Hamilton, Ontario

For a confidential discussion, please contact:

Yves Apel, Vice President and Investment Advisor

905 523-9433 | yves.apel@cibc.com

apelinvestmentgroup.com