

SHALOM

The Journal of the Reading Jewish Community. Published as a community service by the Jewish Federation of Reading, Pa.

Volume 47, No. 5

MAY 2017

IYAR-SIVAN 5777

Jewish Family Service spreads joy of Passover

Jewish Family Service extends its thanks to all who have supported the Jewish Federation and have helped us assist members of our community.

This Passover JFS paid for seven people to attend community seders, bought Passover groceries for eight households and provided Passover food for several inmates at Berks County Prison.

A seder was held for residents of Berks Heim, as well.

At the Manor at Market Square, 40 seniors and family members enjoyed an afternoon Passover Seder sponsored by Jewish Family Service.

Thanks to Sheila Bornstein for her generous donation of delectable, homemade Passover desserts for our seder.

We were fortunate to have an amazing volunteer wait staff – thanks to super-servers Norma Beckerman, Stef Brok, Eddie Kazin, Robert Schneier and Herb Schneider's visiting daughters and son-in-law – Penny, Nancy and Doug.

The seder was funded by a grant from the Jacob Krumholz Jewish Family Service Fund.



Edith Mendelsohn with granddaughter Judith



Sam Silberstein and Lea Berger



Floyd Ruttenberg and Charon Snyder



Glenn, Bob, and Stef Brok

Israel's 'Cornflake Law' means crumbs for poor

Since 2000, food prices in Israel have risen an enormous 50 percent. Though everyone is feeling the crunch, Israel's poor – including the working poor – are unable to afford a balanced and nutritious diet.

"The average salary in Israel is 17 percent lower than that in developed Western countries," said Goldie Sternbuch, Director of Overseas Relations for Meir Panim, an Israel-based charity organization which runs soup kitchens throughout the country. "With food prices in Israel 20 to 60 percent above the OECD average, including basic necessities like dairy products and eggs, Meir Panim is experiencing more and more working poor asking for help."

Several reasons have been cited for the high food prices. Historically, Israel has limited imports, especially of dry goods,

and placed many bureaucratic challenges on imports in order to protect local producers. Additionally, Israeli farmers find that supermarkets mark up fresh Israeli produce by as much as 700 percent. The Israeli government claims help is on its way with a food reform bill dubbed the "Cornflake Law." The importation of many dry goods will face less bureaucratic obstacles, providing easier entry into the country. However, hefty tariffs will remain in place. The new law hopes to allow freer competition in the food market in response to public outcry over high prices. "It is estimated that average households will save approximately 900 NIS (\$233) a year with the new regulations," Sternbuch said. "That's a step in the right direction, but not enough to be a real game-changer for struggling families."

The Taub Center notes that

food purchases account for 16.5 percent of the average Israeli's household expenses and 24 percent for low-income earners. Until now, four Israeli food companies held a monopoly, controlling 35-40 percent of supermarket items.

One of Israel's major food companies, Osem, played down the reform's expected impact on consumers. Osem Chairman Dan Propper stated that he does not expect the changes to make a large impact on the cost of living. Though the Central Bureau of Statistics hopes the law will make a major positive impact on consumers, public opinion is that easing the way for imports into Israel's supermarkets and street-corner groceries does not translate into lower prices.

"It became public knowledge that an Israeli-produced chocolate pudding called 'Milky' was selling

for three times less in Germany than in Israel," Sternbuch said. "Even with public protests about food prices in 2011, known as the 'Cottage Cheese Boycott,' dairy prices have not fallen."

Ofer Klein, head of the economic research division at Harel Insurance and Finance, has said the new regulations are not expected to have an impact on the food market for at least a year, and the impact is not expected to be dramatic. "Meir Panim is finding more and more working poor asking for our help," noted Sternbuch. "While solutions to expensive food prices in Israel are being sought, we need to ensure that citizens have proper food in their homes and in their stomachs. Hunger doesn't wait for effective legislation."

Meir Panim is supported with local dollars from the Jewish Federation of Reading's Israel Now fund.



Community to mark Israel's Memorial Day and Independence Day at May 1 event
 Page 4

Leave a lasting legacy for our Jewish community
 Page 2

A salute to Albright's president upon his retirement
 Page 3

Lipsker's 20 years in Reading celebrated at Chabad gala in March
 Page 7

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE:
 Event offers important information about cancer and Jews
 Page 12



2017 totals as of April 14
 Jewish Community Campaign
 \$199,930
 *Includes transfers from Donor Advised Funds

Consider the options for creating your Jewish legacy

By **Richard Nassau**
Development Director

Spring is here. It's the time of year when my mother, along with her peers, sent us all outside to play. The variety of bikes and allergies helped define an ever-changing community of kids. We'd stop



at someone's house to get water and a snack, making sure Mike didn't eat anything with coconuts. Thinking back, we were probably a little overprotective of Mike. His dad was one of the smaller kids, and his dad had died when he was young. I doubt if he had an allergy to coconut. He probably just didn't like it.

I tell this story because we recently celebrated Passover — a holiday that seems to arrive along with my spring allergies and foods filled with coconut. Coconut and the warming weather trigger memories for me of riding bikes with Mike. It also reminds me of my meeting on behalf of Federation with a different Mike decades later. I worked with him to create his Jewish legacy — a legacy that would benefit young children who have lost a parent.

I'd like to tell you that Mike2 was allergic to coconut. I don't know that for a fact. I do know why he established his legacy gift to Federation through his will. He too was young when his father died and unfortunately not too long after, his mother. It was the charity of the Jewish community and his placement in a Jewish

orphanage that made all the difference for him.

There are no Jewish orphanages as we think of them today. For Mike at the time there were not many alternatives. His opportunities were limited. The Jewish community with its outreach, charitable support, and social services network was there for him. Today we still provide those services, but we can always do more. Mike created his Jewish legacy because he wanted to make sure opportunities, such as educational scholarships, were available for children who have lost a parent.

Recently I had the privilege, along with Carole Robinson, to represent our community at an event sponsored by the Jewish Community Foundation

of Central Pennsylvania. The event was a celebration of the more than 300 community members throughout central Pennsylvania, including 18 from Reading/Berks County, who have signed a Letter of Intent to leave a Jewish legacy.

Letters of Intent are not legally binding. They are however, a heartfelt belief in our future. They are an indication of each person's desire to create a Jewish legacy for our community. A legacy that allows them to provide for their family, while creating ongoing support for what is important and meaningful to them.

For a confidential discussion about the many options you have for creating your Jewish legacy, please call me.

Israeli Scouts enter partnership with Yemin Orde

Israel's popular Israeli Scouts Movement (Tzofim in Hebrew) recently hosted a national conference inspired by the Village Way Educational Institute's work on issues of cultural diversity and identity. The Institute's program, called "Multifaceted Israeli Culture", provides resources and training to professionals working in diverse cultural environments, such as the Israeli scouts.

Tzofim is the largest youth movement in Israel, with more than 80,000 active members in nearly 100 cities, towns and villages. More than 400 leaders of the national youth movement in Israel attended the conference held in Netanya. Dotan Levy, Director, Village Way Educational Institute, was the keynote speaker. He encouraged Tzofim conference participants to re-examine their ideas about the issue of diversity. "We should be working to include more new immigrants and others — not as a way of helping weaker populations — but as a way of strengthening this movement," Levy said. Diversity is a "resource for you and something you can gain from, rather than a problem or issue," he said.

Today more than 1,600 Ethiopian-Israeli scouts participate in the Tzofim program. These Scouts have an opportunity to bond with their Israeli peers and to form meaningful, long-lasting friendships with them.

The Village Way Educational Institute is a think tank of professionals with expertise working with at-risk youth. Yemin Orde's Village Way Educational Initiatives is designed to broaden the impact of the Yemin Orde education philosophy to help the world's at-risk youth population live a secure and productive life. It provides resources and facilitators to share the Village Way holistic methodology with youth villages and public high schools throughout Israel. The Institute's team works with educators in 30 partner communities including schools in Israeli-Arab neighborhoods.

The "Multifaceted Israeli Culture" program helps to increase participants' cultural knowledge about Ethiopian-Israelis, build trust, provide tools for dialogue, and develop a sense of belonging. In addition to the Scouts movement, the Educational Institute is also working with the Israel Border Police and the Israel Defense Force.

An education officer with the Israel Border Police said: "Each one of the officers learned something important from the Institute's seminar. I was surprised to see how it is still possible to

get such experienced officers looking at things in a new light."

Yemin Orde is supported with local dollars from the Jewish Federation of Reading's Israel Now fund.



Rebecca Robinson, Dena Kaufman and Paulette Keifer

Legacy Gifts for Synagogues

The Jewish Federation of Reading sponsored a special workshop on *Legacy Gifts for Synagogues* with Dena Kaufman from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. She spoke to representatives from Keshet Zion, Oheb Shalom and Chabad about the importance of securing legacy gifts for their organizations and the Jewish community.

Paulette Keifer and Rebecca Robinson from the Jewish Community Foundation of Central Pennsylvania also spoke about their work helping organizations secure legacy gifts. The Community Foundation provides training and support to many Jewish organizations in Central Pennsylvania

helping each to integrate legacy giving into their philanthropic culture.

The Community Foundation's legacy initiative, in which the Jewish Federation of Reading participates, has resulted in more than 300 legacy commitments throughout the Central Pennsylvania region with an estimated value of more than \$8 million.

For a confidential discussion or for more information about creating your legacy gift, contact the Federation at 610.921.0624.

Please remember the Jewish community with a gift in your will, trust, retirement account, or life insurance policy.

Ehrlich

Your Local Pest Control Experts

Trust the pest experts

With over 80 years of experience, we've seen and solved just about every pest problem imaginable.

- Termite Control
- General Pest Control
- Bird & Bat Control
- Mosquito & Tick Control
- Bed Bug Control
- Weed Control
- Ant & Spider Control
- Year Round Protection

Call Ehrlich at (855) 226-0075 or visit jcehrlich.com

ENGAGE

in new friendships.

ENGAGE

WELLNESS-FOCUSED LIVING
AT THE HIGHLANDS

610-775-2300
2000 Cambridge Ave.
Wyomissing

THEHIGHLANDS.ORG

A member of Reading Health System

From the President's Desk

Let's keep up momentum after busy six weeks

By William D. Franklin
President

The last six weeks with Purim and Passover and everything in between have been great! For me, the highlight was helping Amanda Hornberger at our Purim festival for



kids. There were more than 36 of our community's children attending, many of whom I had never met before. Watching them gleefully drown out Haman's name and assist a

magician with his tricks was wonderful. It beautifully engaged our next generation — a primary goal of our Federation. Let's work together to keep that momentum going

In April, we also began to redesign our Jewish Community High School. We need to enhance its appeal and relevance to our Jewish teens. I am part of a family heavily involved in education — my mother, father and Andi were university teachers, and two of our sons currently are also. In my former life, I ran a family company that developed textbook and classroom materials for educational publishers.

So, it is meaningful and rewarding to work with our youth, parents, Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner and national experts to improve our high school.

Andi and I also attended the national AIPAC convention. Being with 18,000 other Jews and supporters of Israel to hear from Republicans, Democrats, and other left- and right-leaning Jewish speakers about the issues, problems, successes and challenges of Israel was invigorating.

The value of community is evident as many of us come together regularly to help Rabbi Lipsker make minyan so he can say Kaddish for his father, alav

ha-shalom. It was a personal pleasure to twice take one of our grandsons along to make a minyan and observe his understanding of the mitzvah of community and the importance of his presence.

The next two months will also be important for our future as we prepare our budget, programming and support services for next year. Please join us on May 1 as we memorialize Yom HaZikaron and celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut and at our Annual Meeting on June 11 at the Wyomissing Hills Park.

You help make Reading special.

Caron to honor three from Jewish community

Three members of the Jewish community are to be honored by the Caron Foundation for their work in the ongoing fight against drug and alcohol addiction in our area.

Caron will hold its 21st annual Berks County Community Service Awards Breakfast, to be held May 26 at the DoubleTree by Hilton hotel in Reading.

Susan Fromm will receive the Catherine Caron "Heart of the Family" award, Chana Lipsker is the winner of the Spirituality Award, and the late Anne Seltzer is being honored posthumously with the Community Leadership Award.

To learn more about the ceremony, including ticket information, go to www.caron.org/events.



Caron Foundation award winners, from left, Susan Fromm, Chana Lipsker and the late Anne Seltzer.

Retiring Albright president a friend to Jewish community

By William D. Franklin

In May, Dr. Lex O. McMillan III will be retiring as President of Albright College.

In addition to nurturing the outstanding growth of Albright, he has been a wonderful friend of our Reading Jewish community.

Dr. McMillan's support for our annual Richard J. Yashek Memorial lectures and the Leo Camp Memorial lecture series has educated Albright students and the Reading community and increased their understanding of key issues our country faces.

His leadership of the recent successful "That Their Light May Shine" campaign will lead to new and enhanced facilities, including the beautiful expansion of the Edwin & Alma N. '51 Lakin Holocaust Library & Resource Center, established in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Reading.

The center will become an even more valuable asset to our community.

During his 12-year tenure, Albright College greatly expanded enrollment, launched many academic programs, expanded its accelerated

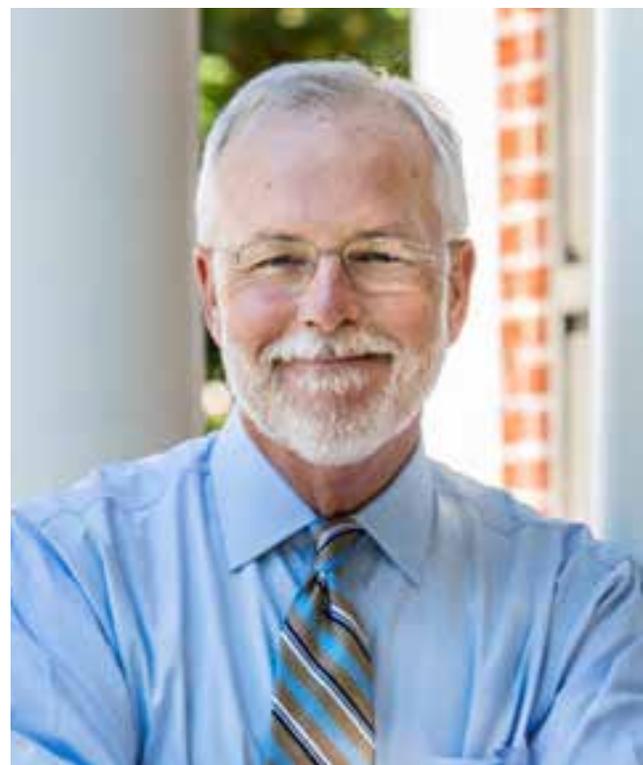
degree programs and built a new science center, the Schumo Center for Fitness and Well-Being and the John K. Roessner III '61 Hall, The Center for Business and Civic Leadership.

Amid all these accomplishments, *Newsweek* named Albright College as a top 25 school for artistic students.

Jacquelyn S. Fetrow, Ph.D. '82, an accomplished higher education administrator, widely published biochemist and award-winning teacher, was recently named the 15th president of Albright College by the College's Board of Trustees.

"Under President McMillan's incredible leadership, the College has made tremendous forward progress in the last decade, and this appointment will allow for a continuation of that great work," said board chair Jeff Joyce '83.

Please join us in thanking Dr. McMillan for the many contributions he has made to our Jewish and general community and wish him and his wife, Dottie, many more happy and successful retirement years.



SHALOM

A newspaper serving the Jewish community of Reading, Pennsylvania, and published monthly, September through June, under the Jewish Federation of Reading. Funded by the Reading United Jewish Campaign.

General Offices: 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 125
Wyomissing, PA 19610
Phone: 610-921-0624 FAX: 610-929-0886
Web site: www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org

Jewish Federation of Reading

Chairman: Haia Mazuz
President: William D. Franklin
Communications Director: Mark Nemirow, Editor
Proofreaders: Federation staff
Member: American Jewish Press Association

The opinions expressed in Shalom are of the writers and not the Jewish Federation of Reading

Next deadline, May 5

It's Simcha Supplement time

If you had or are having a bar/bat mitzvah or graduation (high school or higher) in your family this Jewish year, share the good news with the community. Please submit a few sentences about the person and their accomplishment, along with a photo.

Text and photos can be sent to Marknem@aol.com or to the Federation office.

**MATERIAL NEEDED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
WE CANNOT GUARANTEE PUBLICATION OF
ITEMS SUBMITTED AFTER MAY 1**

Israeli drama final film of 2016-17 Reading Jewish Film Series

By Amanda J. Hornberger

On Wednesday, May 17, 7 p.m. at FOX EAST, the Reading Jewish Film Series will conclude with "Apples from the Desert," a poignant drama of love and reconciliation.

In "Apples from the Desert," Rebecca is an only child living with her strictly religious Sephardic parents in Jerusalem. Rebecca begins to secretly break taboos by attending dance classes, where she forms a relationship with a secular kibbutznik. Faced with her rebellion, Rebecca's father reacts by setting in motion a prearranged marriage to an

older widower with children of his own. After Rebecca runs away from home, the family conflict culminates in a moment of truth, forcing them to confront their beliefs and one another.

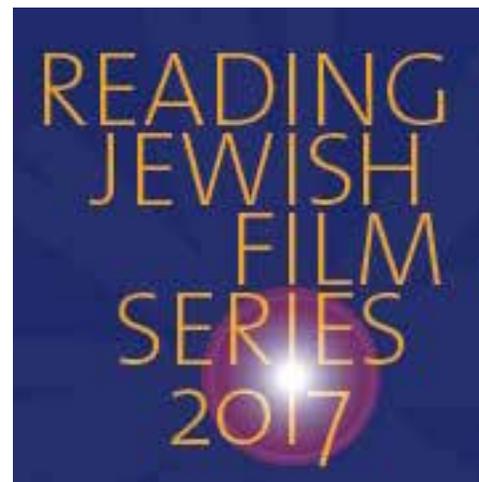
Nominated for three Israeli Academy Awards, "Apples from the Desert" is a timeless and moving tale of tradition versus modernity.

"Apples from the Desert" will be shown on Wednesday, May 17, at 7 p.m. at FOX EAST, 4350 Perkiomen Ave., Exeter Township (next to Boscov's East). Ticket sales will begin at 6:30 p.m. and admission is \$5.

The 2017 Reading Jewish Film Series is co-sponsored by the Rubin Educational Fund of the Jewish Federation of Reading and Fox Theatres.

Special thanks to Lorraine Young and the staff at FOX EAST for their help in ensuring the Reading Jewish Film Series is a success. Thank you to Nancy Russo for helping sell tickets before each screening.

We hope to see you again next year for the 2018 Reading Jewish Film Series, which will begin in the fall. The list of films will be released in the summer edition of *Shalom!*



JCC offering June bus trip to fascinating play in Philadelphia

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Community members are invited to join the JCC bus trip to Philadelphia on Sunday, June 25. We will be headed to the Plays and Players Theatre in Philadelphia to see the new play "The Roses in June."

Set in London on the eve of Israel's 1967 Six-Day War, "The Roses in June," explores the struggle of love, fear, regret and forgiveness on the eve of a possible second Holocaust. Ingrid and George Rose have successfully rebuilt their lives in Britain after

fleeing Nazi Germany but, when their son is a victim of bullying and anti-Semitism at school, the trauma of their own persecution re-emerges with almost deadly consequences.

The charter Bieber bus will leave the JCC at 11:30 for a 2 p.m. matinee of "The Roses in June." Following the show there is a talkback. Afterwards there will be free time for dinner on your own in Rittenhouse Square before our return to the JCC that evening.

The cost is \$40 for JCC members and \$45 for non-members and includes an orchestra seat for the play, chartered Bieber bus and driver gratuity. Please note that Plays and Players Theatre is not handicapped accessible, and there are stairs in the theatre.

Space is limited, so RSVP today! RSVP deadline with payment by June 12. For questions or more information please contact Amanda at amandah@jfreeding.org or 610-921-0624.

All Around the Town

Mazel tov to **Diane and Kurt Hollis** on the marriage of their daughter Leah Eidson to Timothy Allen.

Mazel tov to parents **Jamee Artz and Nick Blanck, grandfather Korey Blanck, great-grandmother Edith Blanck and uncle Dr. Bryan Blanck** on the birth of Kennedy Skylar Blanck.

Dr. Bryan Blanck, 39, residing for 10 years in Ada, Okla., has constructed his new private practice medical building in Ada. The office is managed by his wife, Nicole. The

10,000-square-foot building allows stem cell wound care, in-office surgeries and his general medical practice.

Congratulations to Daniel Boone High School graduate **Rachel Eidson**. A freshman at East Stroudsburg University, she won the 3,000 meter steeplechase race at Lafayette College's 7-Way Invitational.

We love good news about members of our community! Please share it by emailing Marknem@aol.com.

Until next time: Shalom!

Community to mark Israel's Memorial Day, Independence Day

By Amanda J. Hornberger

Join us on Monday, May 1 at 7 p.m. to commemorate Israeli Memorial Day (Yom Hazikaron) and Israeli Independence Day (Yom Ha'atzmaut). Photos of fallen IDF soldiers along with special readings and a moment

of silence will be held in honor of the fallen for Israeli Memorial Day.

After the ceremony we will celebrate Israel's Independence Day with Israeli food and music.

The entire community is invited to this FREE event at the JCC.

RESCHEDULED — Left vs. Right Debate: Is peace in Israel possible

By Amanda J. Hornberger

From opposite sides of the political spectrum, two friends hash out the largest policy issues facing Israel and the Middle East in the Left vs. Right Debate featuring J.J. Goldberg and Jonathan Tobin.

Goldberg and Tobin, both expert journalists, will be in Reading in May to lay it on the line, one from the right side, the other the left and exchange real solutions for peace. Tobin, senior online editor and chief political blogger of *Commentary* magazine, and J. J. Goldberg, editor-at-large of the *Forward* newspaper and former U.S. bureau chief of the Israeli news magazine *The Jerusalem Report*, will debate the critical issues concerning the State of Israel.

Topics will include what to expect

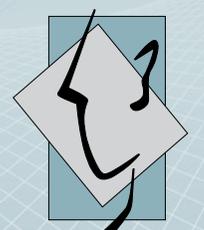
from the Trump administration regarding Middle East policy, the viability and ramification of a two-state solution, the appropriate responses to BDS, and the role international consensus should play in Israeli policy in particular regarding West Bank settlements.

Dialogue will be moderated by Dr. Michelle Mart of Penn State Berks.

Join us for an interactive conversation on Israel with Tobin and Goldberg on Thursday, May 4, at 7 p.m. at the JCC. Following a moderated conversation the audience will be able to ask questions at this free event. Questions will be accepted that evening or prior to the event via email to Amanda at amandah@jfreeding.org.

The event is free but RSVPs are encouraged to Brenda at Brendas@jfreeding.org or 610-921-0624.

Pediatric and Adult Patients Treating Ear, Nose, Throat Problems Thyroid Nodules, Neck Masses & Sinusitis



ENT
Ear • Nose • Throat

HEAD
&
NECK
Specialists, P.C.

Physicians:

James P. Restrepo, M.D., FACS, ECNU
Charles K. Lutz, M.D., FACS
Jeffrey S. Driben, M.D., FACS, ECNU
Scott J. Cronin, M.D.

Nurse Practitioner:

Rosemarie Montgomery
MS, CRNP, FNP-C

THE AUDIOLOGY CENTER

Diagnostic Audiology & Hearing Aid Services

Audiologists:

Kathleen D. Vivaldi, AuD, FAAA
Melanie A. Appler, AuD, FAAA
Matthew R. Bonsall, AuD, FAAA



Providing diagnostic and rehabilitative services for all types of hearing loss, for any age group.
Hearing and Balance Disorders
State of the Art Hearing Aid Fittings
In House Hearing Aid Repairs

ENT Head & Neck Specialists, PC
985 Berkshire Blvd., Wyomissing
610-374-5599 • www.ent-hns.net

ENCORE CHORUS PRESENTS 'AND SO I SING'

The Greater Reading Encore Chorus
will present a free concert
Sunday, May 7 at 2 p.m.
at Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom

The chorus features singers age 55 or older and will perform songs commemorating Memorial Day from a Jewish and Christian traditions, along with a medley from "Fiddler on the Roof."

Israel Book Club: 'The Tail Wags the Dog'

By Andi Franklin and Moisey Schneider

On Thursday, April 13, the Jewish Federation of Reading's Israel Book Club met to discuss Efraim Karsh's "The Tail Wags the Dog." This book was extremely difficult to read. Sentences were long and poorly constructed. Information was overly dense and not presented in coherent or chronological order.

And yet, no book that we have read was as profoundly thought-provoking or perspective-changing as this one. Conventional wisdom since David Fromkin's "A Peace to End All Peace" has it that bungling, Imperialistic Western powers drew national lines for Middle East states that have

forever since been the source of conflict and animosity. Karsh shows through an overabundance of evidence that, in fact, tribal leaders with their own inflated ambitions and a willingness to use deception, intrigue and violence controlled, to a great extent, the drawing of national lines.

Conventional wisdom has it that the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia are using the Middle East as proxies in their power struggle for global dominance and resource accessibility. Again, Karsh shows that it is the subtle machinations of Middle East states that pit the U.S. against Russia. And in fact, it has been Russia who often worked to tamp down Middle East aggressiveness

and violence.

The insights and reversals of understanding go on and on. To read the news and see the world with new eyes is worth the trudge through every convoluted sentence and obscure paragraph.

Join us Thursday, May 25, at 7 p.m. in the Franklin home for our next book, Lewis Glinert's "The Story of Hebrew." He tells a fascinating story that explores the extraordinary hold the Hebrew language has had on Jews and Christians, who have invested it with a symbolic power far beyond any other language in history.

Asking questions adds to enjoyment of Passover Seder

By Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner
Jewish Community High School

Better Together participants, Teens and Seniors, tried a new format — patterned somewhat similar to "Speed Dating" to discuss and review their perceptions of the Passover holiday.

Set in partnerships ("hevruta") at separate tables, a single question was posed to everyone, and then each "hevruta" could share their answers — or even debate their opinions. After a few moments, Rabbi Dov would sound the "bell" and each Teen would move to their right and have a new "hevruta." However, some questions brought out responses that ran "overtime," as participants wanted to continue their conversations.

Subjects for discussion ranged from the Seder symbols to family experiences, at home or away. For example, "if you could

be any symbol on the Seder Table, which one would you choose to be - and why?"

Here are additional questions which you might want to add them to your Seder next year. We wish you the same excitement, joy and satisfaction which our teens and seniors found in the evening's activity.

Who's your favorite character in the Passover story?

A - Pharaoh's daughter, whose quick and creative thinking saved Moses' life?

B - Pharaoh — what can I say, I love a villain?

C - Moses, who helped a group of slaves transform into a united people;

D - Miriam, whose energy inspired a new song for the Jewish people to sing;

E - God, who could not allow the Chosen People to be enslaved any longer.

What's your favorite part of the seder?

A - Contemplating the cruelty of a life of slavery

B - Reciting the 10 plagues with gratitude that the Israelites were protected

C - Talking about the renewal of springtime

D - When my family inserts our own unique traditions

E - Constructing and eating a Hillel sandwich

What kind of Passover guest are you?

A - Excited and filled with springtime joy

B - One who keeps the conversation flowing and everyone comfortable

C - Generous, ready to give up the last helping of your favorite dishes

D - Eager to create new memories



with loved ones
E - A bit impatient to wrap up the seder and eat dinner

This year we will conclude a two-year grant for our Better Together program in which students of the Jewish Community High School have participated.

Fun at Friendship Circle



Top, Jenny Saft, Ethel Engel, and Sy Youngerman enjoy meeting author Barb Walters. Above, Boris Corbin works with artist Alita Abruzzese at Friendship Circle.

Upcoming events in the community



For more information on any of these events please call 610-921-0624.

Mon May 1, 2017

7 pm Yom Hazikaron/Yom Ha'atzmaut Event

Where: Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom, 555 Warwick Dr, Wyomissing, PA 19610

Wed May 17, 2017

7 pm Reading Jewish Film Series: Apples from the Desert

Where: Fox East, 4350 Perkiomen Ave, Reading, PA 19606

Thu May 18, 2017

7 pm JFR Board Meeting

Where: 1100 Berkshire Blvd, Wyomissing, PA 19610

Mon May 29, 2017

JCC Closed for Memorial Day

Wed May 31, 2017

JCC Closed for Shavuot

Thurs June 1, 2017

JCC Closed for Shavuot

Sun June 11, 2017

12 pm JCC Annual Meeting & Picnic

Where: Wyomissing Hills Playground, 53 Valley Road, Wyomissing, PA 19610

Mon June 19, 2017

2 pm 92nd St. Y Program

Where: The Highlands Cultural Center Side B, 2000 Cambridge Ave, Wyomissing, PA 19610

Sun June 25, 2017

JCC Bus Trip to Philadelphia

Profiles in Leadership: Corinne and Andy Wernick

Profiles in Leadership is a series of articles to help the community get to know board members of the Jewish Federation of Reading along with their families and why they actively participate in our community. We hope it inspires you and others to become more involved with our programs and in shaping the future of our Jewish community. This month – Corinne and Andy Wernick.

What is your family's background?

Corinne: My mother, Esther Bratt, was born in Vilna, which at that time was considered the "Jerusalem of Lithuania." My mother was an only child but had a large extended family in part because her father was the youngest of 11 children. Prior to the war, my mother's family lived a normal life in Vilna and would occasionally travel to Belgium to visit family. All of that changed when the Nazis invaded Poland. During the war, my mother and her parents were expelled from their home and spent several years in ghettos and labor camps in and around Vilna. Thankfully, they were never split up and were extremely fortunate to have survived the war together. After Poland was liberated, they traveled to a displaced persons camp in Austria and eventually made their way to the United States, settling in New York. Shortly after their arrival, my grandfather connected with his brother-in-law, who owned a hosiery mill in Reading. He joined the business and then moved to Reading with my grandmother in 1949.

My father, Sid Bratt, was born in East Prussia and survived the war by going to England as part of the Kindertransport. He and his father were the only survivors from his immediate family, having lost his mother, twin brothers and younger sister. My grandfather reunited with my father in the UK after the war and then remarried and also settled in New York.

My parents met in New York and moved to Reading after they married. My parents described the move to Reading as a culture shock. They missed the noise, walking on the busy streets and especially the Jewish delis. My father's parents followed them to Reading after retirement.

Growing up in Reading with both sets of grandparents was wonderful. My sisters



and I loved our special sleepovers at their apartments and just spending time with them.

Today Andy and I have two married sons, Aaron and Melissa, Brian and Joy along with a 16-month-old granddaughter Maya.

Andy: My parents were born in the Philadelphia area and lived there their entire lives. Although both my grandparents were immigrants, they were very "Americanized" thus, we had very little European influence in our household. Unlike Corinne's, our "Passover seder family" was very large, often squeezing 60 people in my grandmother's house for our seders. Growing up in my neighborhood, which was predominantly Jewish, enabled me to be involved in a very large Jewish circle. We almost took for granted the fact that there were Jewish people everywhere

resulting in random meetings in the grocery store, department stores and even going down to the Jersey shore.

What led to your involvement with the Jewish community and Federation?

Corinne: As you can see from my family background, I don't take being Jewish for granted. My parents suffered so much just because they were Jewish that I feel a strong connection to Israel and the Jewish community. Being Jewish has always been a strong part of my life. It makes me feel good to be involved.

When I moved back to Reading in 1980, after I was just married, Andy and I went to a casino night at the JCC, it was there that we met many friends who to this day remain very close to us. We were fortunate that the Jewish community embraced us and made us feel so welcome. The JCC

and synagogue became the central part of our lives. This strong bond carried through to our children as they attended JCC Nursery School, Camp Asodi and Hebrew school at Keshar Zion.

Andy: From my perspective, not having grown up in Reading and consequently not knowing anyone, I was uneasy about moving into a small town like Reading. However, After joining the JCC it gave me an opportunity to see firsthand all of the things the JCC was doing for the Jewish community. I then decided to get involved and joined the Adult Activity Committee, which was in charge for the programming side of the JCC. We put on many events involving all age groups, which included the nursery school and the JCC camp. It was great to see how the programs helped keep the Jewish community very close knit and tight. Since then and to this day, I have been involved with the JCC.

What is most significant to you about our Jewish community here in Reading?

Corinne: Although it is clear that Reading's Jewish community is becoming smaller it is wonderful to see that there is a strong group of young families coming to town who are becoming active members of the community. This is very significant and heartwarming to me as I witness another generation carrying forward Jewish life in Reading.

Andy: Coming from the Philadelphia area, Jewish life was all around you. Living in Reading, it was clear that this was not the case and you had to get involved to make it work. The benefit of a small Jewish community is the close relationships we developed with everyone, which filtered to our children. This was and still is very important to me to keep our community thriving and growing.

Harvard-Technion study suggests new Parkinson's theory

Researchers from the Technion and Harvard are offering a new theory on how Parkinson's disease

develops that could change the way the neurological disease is treated. Associate Professor Simone

Engelender of the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology and her colleague Ole Isacson at Harvard Medical School say the toxic protein behind Parkinson's may not spread like an infection from nerve cell to nerve but rather that the protein, called alpha-synuclein, may simultaneously affect all parts of the nervous system inside and outside of the brain.

They describe this "threshold theory" of Parkinson's for the first time in a report recently published in Trends in Neuroscience. "Instead of studying how proteins move from one neuron to another and searching for compounds that prevent the 'spread' of aggregated a-synuclein, we need to study why a-synuclein accumulates within neurons and how these neurons die in the disease, and search for compounds that prevent the general neuronal dysfunction," said Engelender.

Parkinson's disease destroys nerve cells throughout the body, especially key neurons in the brain that produce a compound called dopamine that helps to control movement and posture. The disease grows worse over time, and there is no known cure. More than 1 million people in the United States have the disorder, according to the Parkinson's Disease Foundation.

The disease is caused by accumulation of a-synuclein, which overwhelms and destroys nerve

cells. The most commonly-held theory about the disease suggests that patients get progressively worse as clumps of a-synuclein spread between neurons, almost like an infection.

But Engelender and Isacson think the scientific evidence points to a different model of the disease. Instead of spreading from neuron to neuron, they say, aggregations of a-synuclein develop throughout the body at the same time. Different parts of the nervous system vary in how much of this toxic protein they can tolerate, depending on how well the cells in that part of the system work together to compensate for any destroyed cells.

The researchers say their theory fits better with patients' symptoms. "The only specific treatment that is and will continue to be beneficial is the replenishment of dopamine in the brain, through the intake of the supplement L-Dopa, to improve the motor symptoms," said Engelender. "This has been done for several decades and should be continued to be done since it can at least alleviate the motor symptoms for a few years, even if does not cure and does not prevent the progression of the disease." "Nevertheless, I believe that the search for compounds that specifically decrease a-synuclein levels are the only hope to provide a real and more effective treatment for the disease," said Engelender.

Introduce your child
to the joy of Shabbat!

Tot
Shabbat

is a musical, story-filled, interactive hour for children through grade 2. Bring your family & friends to celebrate with Rabbi Michelson and stay for a pint-sized one of juice, challah, fruit, and child-friendly treats.

Join us
next time!
May 13th
at 10 am

Members and non-members are invited. No registration is required. Tot Shabbat services are held Saturday mornings at 10:00 am at Reform Congregation Ohev Shalom, 555 Warwick Drive, Wyomissing unless noted. Please call the Temple office with any questions, 610.375.6034.



Save the Date: Tot Shabbat BBQ
Sunday, August 27th at 11 am at the home of
Jennifer & Joseph Woodward.

Congregational News

Community celebrates Lipsker's 20 years of great service

Rabbi Yosef Lipsker and his family celebrated 20 years of service to Berks County with a gala March 26 at the Chabad Center that he founded.

The "Celebration of Hope" event, which featured national radio host and columnist Dennis Prager and attracted an audience of about 250 people, received coverage from Philadelphia's *Jewish Exponent* and the *Reading Eagle*.

The Exponent recounted how Lipsker became a spiritual counselor to people undergoing addiction treatment at the Caron Foundation near Wernersville, which now makes up a significant amount of his work. It started with one patient seeking help from a rabbi, evolved into inviting Caron patients to the Lipsker home for Shabbat dinner and ultimately became a lifelong commitment. His work helps people overcome addiction and develop a new, stronger relationship with Judaism.

Caron is donating \$100,000 toward a hospitality center at Chabad with a kitchen that can feed 50 or more and four full bedrooms for family members of Caron patients. Gala patrons pledged \$350,000 that day toward the project. Lipsker hopes the \$500,000 center can open by September. This will enable the Lipskers to host more people than they can in their home.

Keynote speaker Prager, a friend of Rabbi Lipsker's, told the *Eagle* that he accepted the invitation to speak because Caron saved his son's life. He focused his remarks on the power of hope.

During the event awards were given out to Caron's David Rotenberg (Community Service Award); Dr. Jerome Marcus (Pillar of the Community Award); and Sandy Solmon (Community Leadership Award).



At left, Chana and Rabbi Yosef Lipsker with Dennis and Susan Prager. At right, honoree David Rotenberg with Rabbi Lipsker.

Get out your bat and ball, because spring is here

By Rabbi Yosef Lipsker
Chabad Center of Berks County

Spring training is, in essence, pre-season training for professional baseball teams, but it is also a signal for children and adults all over the United States to pick up their bats and balls and head off to



the local park or baseball field and play the game fondly referred to as the 'national pastime'. Many people are intrigued and perplexed by the whole game and just why we Americans love it so passionately. Much has been written and discussed about this phenomenon, but I would like to offer a perspective, one which relates to the festival of Pesach that we just celebrated.

Baseball is a summer game, but it commences in spring. As the damp, freezing weather and chilly conditions of winter — with its many demands on the physical and mental health of the individual - draw to a close, the spring heralds relief. The spring urges us to cast off the shackles of winter that keep us confined and constrained. One can now venture out without having to consult the weather forecast, and without wondering how warmly to be dressed and wrapped up.

We feel rejuvenated and fresh, ready to enjoy the color and vibrancy of life once again.

The reason for baseball's popularity is that it signifies this transformation of life. It is not just an enjoyable pastime but also a powerful signal of what lies ahead now that the intoxicating scents of fresh flowers and grass are in the air. It reminds us summer is not far away

and that plans can be made for social occasions enjoyed in warm weather. One's spirit is raised with a good feeling that winter darkness is being replaced by summer sunshine.

The game is thus linked with all things bright and positive.

In Judaism, too, there is a strong emphasis placed on spring. The Torah tells us that Pesach is to be celebrated in spring: "You shall observe the month of springtime and perform the Passover offering..." [Deuteronomy 16: 1].

There is a deep association between Pesach and spring. Pesach, as the Haggadah clearly tells us, is a time when we were taken "from slavery to freedom, from deep darkness to great light." One moment we were at our lowest point and despised as slaves oppressed by a cruel tormenter. And then in one powerful instant we were transformed into a free, proud and independent nation. Out of the darkness, we were liberated into great light.

Spring, too, is characterized by a sort of awakening, as the bleakness and dreariness of winter is shed and replaced by greenery and color. The plants and trees begin to blossom and bloom with a freshness that was so lacking during the winter. A more specific example is that of a kernel placed in the ground, where it undergoes a radical transformation, including decay, when it seems to disappear. But out of this there shoots forth a brand new creation; a living, growing organism. Again, we see darkness and obscurity replaced by light and life.

Pesach and spring both symbolize an actual change to something new and better.

What can we learn from the newness and freshness of Pesach and spring?

In life there are restraints and challenges that hinder our progress and make it difficult to fully realize our potential.

Like everything else, initially everything is fine and comfortable, but gradually we slip from our own high standards and routine. The focus wanes and we become insensitive to Judaism's rich heritage, ritual and

meaning. It becomes 'stale', frigid, and dark.

To this our response must be like spring and Pesach. They represent a movement from one extreme to another, and we too are capable of advancing and progressing. Yes, it takes time to readjust and be at ease but practice, with a newfound excitement, makes perfect.

LOCAL CONGREGATIONS AND SERVICE TIMES

REFORM CONGREGATION OHEB SHOLOM (610) 375-6034

Friday, May 5: 6 p.m. Fridays, May 12 and 19: 7:45 p.m.

Friday, May 26: 7 p.m. Saturday, May 13: Tot Shabbat, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, May 30: Shavuot service and program, 7:30 p.m.

CHABAD CENTER OF BERKS COUNTY (610) 921-0881

Saturday mornings: 9:30 a.m.; Friday evenings: 6:30 p.m.

KESHER ZION SYNAGOGUE (610) 374-1763

Weekly services Saturdays: 9:30 a.m.; Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.

SERVICES HELD AT JCC, 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 125, Wyomissing

CONGREGATION SHOMREI HABRITH

May ☆ Iyar - Sivan



Shabbat Candle Lightings

May 5
7:45 p.m.

May 12
7:52 p.m.

May 19
7:59 p.m.

May 26
8:05 p.m.



Torah Portions

May 6/Iyar 10
Acharei-Kedoshim (Leviticus 16:1 – 20:27)

May 13/Iyar 17
Emor (Leviticus 21:1 – 24:23)

May 20/Iyar 24
Behar-Bechukotai (Leviticus 25:1 – 27:34)

May 27/Sivan 2
Bamidbar (Numbers 1:1 – 4:20)

Plight of Christians in Middle East a stain on humanity

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin described the plight of Christians in the Middle East as “a stain on humanity,” during a meeting with the head of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem and the Greek Orthodox Patriarch morning in honor of Easter.

The president noted the recent terror attacks against Coptic Christians in Egypt as well as the persecution of Syrian Christians by ISIS and other extremist Islamist groups, and said that Israel would continue to protect its Christian population.

“I say to you here, our Christian

brothers of Jerusalem, our thoughts are with you at this difficult time,” said the president at the Latin Patriarchate in the Old City of Jerusalem where the meeting was staged

“We have all seen the pictures from Syria; I visited some of the injured being treated in Israeli hospitals. What has happened there to the Christian community — and to the whole country — is a stain on all humanity.”

Rivlin said that the Jewish people “know better than any what it means to pray in fear, and suffer from terrorism,” and promised that the

country would “protect your freedom of worship, your security, and the security of your holy sites.”

Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who is serving as the Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of the Latin Patriarchate, thanked Rivlin for his expressions of support for Christians in the Middle East.

He noted however that Israel too has suffered from anti-Christian attacks, such as the arson attack against the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish, while also mentioning Rivlin’s visit to the site in solidarity with the Christian community

in Israel.

Pizzaballa added that Christians were a critical part of the country and of Jerusalem, saying that they constitute “an integral part of the identity of the city, without which Jerusalem couldn’t be the same.”

Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Theophilos III, echoed this sentiment, calling Jerusalem a place that “embraces a multi-religious and multi-ethnic mosaic,” and said that the city could be. He noted that an example of “harmonious coexistence and a synthesis of traditions and civilizations.”

Israel turning garbage dump into energy resource

Officials launched a refuse derived fuel (RDF) plant at the Hiriya Recycling Park – a waste sorting and recycling plant that sits at the foot of the region’s towering former garbage dump. The largest such project to date in Israel, the facility will be producing alternative fuel to provide a source of energy for cement production at the nearby Nesher plant.

“The RDF plant is an innovative, flexible and modular plant, which serves as successful model for a collaboration between industry that needs raw materials for energy and an urban sector that needs a solution to the waste problem and a technological body that is ready to take a risk despite the challenge,” said Doron Sapir, chairman of the Hiriya Recycling Park.

The plant will be absorbing about

1,500 tons of household waste every day, or approximately half the garbage from the residents of the Gush Dan region — amounting to a total of half a million tons of trash each year, according to the project. Behind the facility’s launch was a team of partners, including the Hiriya Recycling Park, the Dan Municipal Sanitation Association, Nesher Israel Cement Enterprises and the Veridis environmental service corporation.

“The RDF plant is one of the most advanced and largest in the world – spearheading a steadfast and diligent effort of the Dan Municipal Sanitation Association to improve and advance waste management in Israel, and in the Dan Region in particular,” Sapir said. “I believe that the combination of resources, technologies and the public’s willingness

to change consumption and recycling habits is key to a sustainable future and the preservation of environmental resources.”

Using industrial and municipal waste as a combustion material, RDF has become recognized globally as an environmentally friendly fuel source and is commonly used to power the cement industry, a statement from the partners said. The household waste is sorted using advanced technological methods, and those materials appropriate for burning — such as plastic bags, other plastics, textiles, tree trimmings, cardboard and paper — are used as an alternative fuel source at the Nesher plant, the statement explained. The new RDF facility is expected to produce about 500 tons of RDF fuel substitute

daily, serving as a combustion material that will provide 20% of the thermal energy necessary to operate the Nesher factory, the partners added. “The cement industry requires long-term vision. Heavy industry is often perceived as a polluter, despite the huge investment in the environment and the use of advanced technologies,” said Moshe Kaplinsky, CEO of Nesher Israel Cement Enterprises. “The RDF project aligns Israel with the most technologically advanced [countries] in Europe, while reducing the environmental impacts of households in Israel and reducing energy consumption from traditional sources. This is another step toward realizing the vision of an advanced Israeli industry that views environmental protection as an ultimate value.”

Palestinian Authority textbooks teach pupils to be martyrs

The latest Palestinian Authority elementary school textbooks are even more radical than previous editions, according to a report just issued by the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education. The report was based on examination of elementary-school grades one through four and high-school grades 11 and 12 of the 2016-2017 PA’s educational curriculum. As such, the report concluded that the curriculum does not meet the UNESCO-derived standards of peace and tolerance in education.

The new textbooks showed deterioration in messages of tolerance and peace compared to previous editions. They teach pupils to become expendable martyrs and reject negotiations, while demonizing and denying the existence of the State of Israel, according to the findings. “Despite assurances from the PA Education Ministry, these new books are actually more radical than we have previously seen,” IMPACT-se CEO Marcus Sheff said of the findings. “There is clear evidence of a strategy of radicalization of young Palestinians, devised and implemented by the ministry, which includes a commitment to an Arab Palestine encompassing the entirety of Israel,” he said.

IMPACT-se is a research center that analyzes schoolbooks and curricula for compliance with UNESCO-defined standards on peace and tolerance. It

was founded in 1998 and is based in Jerusalem. The study, conducted by Dr. Eldad Pardo of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, focused on 45 textbooks and teacher’s guides published in 2016.

The report provides numerous examples of radicalization. One third-grade textbook encourages children to become “martyrs” by using an illustration of pupils in the classroom looking at their friend’s empty desk, with a sign that reads: “The Martyr.” Another example, from a fourth-grade math textbook, asks pupils to compute how many martyrs died in the two intifadas combined. The question is accompanied by a photograph of a funeral procession featuring coffins draped in the Palestinian flag. The study further found that the struggle against Israel and its disappearance were main themes in the schoolbooks. A political map in a third-grade textbook shows Palestine in the entire territory of Israel.

“The most troubling aspects of this curriculum involve the attitude of PA/ PLO/Fatah authorities toward the 6- to 10-year-old children who are considered to be expendable; and the indoctrination of these youth to the idea that all of Israel belongs to Palestine and all Israelis are evil,” the report stated.

The study did find some positive notes in the curriculum, including that national institutions and authorities should be respected and that Islam is

not to be used as a radical political tool. Furthermore, traditional gender roles are maintained by girls and boys, who

are not depicted as segregated, and veiling is accepted but not specifically encouraged.

Mini Chefs

Hey kids! Roll up your sleeves and get busy! Come experience the joy of Kosher cooking, baking, craft making, and game playing.

Cheese Cake Making

SUNDAY, MAY 28, FROM 2:30 TO 4:30 P.M.

At Chabad Lubavitch
2320 Hampden Blvd - Reading, PA 19604
Cost: \$8

RSVP lipskerreading@aol.com or 610-334-1577

BARRER & WHITE
 O R T H O D O N T I S T S

Call Today for Your Complimentary Consultation 610-376-3956

311 Penn Avenue, West Reading, 19611

BarrerAndWhite.com

James G. Barrer, DMD

Douglas W. White, DMD



Israeli NGO provides relief as Peru faces flooding disaster

Israeli NGO IsraAID has deployed a team to Peru, where communities are facing shortages of food, clean water, and hygienic materials after catastrophic flooding and landslides killed 94 and left 700,000 homeless, the organization said.

In a statement IsraAID said that “Peru continues to struggle after weeks of catastrophic post El Nino rains which triggered flash floods and deadly landslides throughout the country, including in Lima its capital...contaminated water sources are leading to growing fears of a mass disease outbreak.”

The crisis is being described as Peru’s worst flooding disaster in decades.

In addition to distributing relief materials, the NGO is “conducting trauma prevention training for teachers and other community stakeholders.”

“Hearing stories of people who lost everything is heartbreaking, but we continue to be amazed by people’s ability to stay together, and help each other overcome these difficult times” said IsraAID Programs Director and head of mission to Peru Naama Gorodischer.

Many people are living out of tents after catastrophic flooding ruined home Gloria Sedano Pascual, a resident of Lima’s Carapongo area describe

how “the last mudslide left everything destroyed; my house is inhabitable, my garden is destroyed, and my belongings are ruined.” However, she notes, with the help of groups like IsraAID, the community can rebuild. “With Israel’s expertise we can try to rebuild my community, teaching them about these simple methods to grow their own crops,” Pascual said. “We also can experiment with building more sustainable shelters than the tents we were given now. We need a lot of help such as water, food, and clothes supplies but my hope is to, with the help of IsraAID, organize activities that will help my community in the long term. I believe we can accomplish a lot when we work together,” she added.

Neighboring Colombia was hit by a similar disaster Saturday, where at least 154 people were killed and 400 more injured in the town of Mocoa after heavy rains caused rivers to overflow and triggered mudslides. Hundreds were said to be missing. IsraAID said that it was also preparing to provide necessary assistance in Colombia. “We are monitoring the situation with our partners, and standing by to respond,” the organization posted on Facebook. “Our thoughts and prayers go out to



the people of #Mocoa, #Putumayo, #Colombia after the city was devastated by flash flooding and mudslides.”

The El Nino phenomenon began warming the waters of the Pacific

ocean earlier this year, leading to torrential rains. Some areas of Peru have seen record amounts of rainfall. The rains are forecasted to continue through April.

Jewish Federations of North America 2017 policy priorities

With the new administration and the beginning of the 115th Congress, key JFNA points for the major areas of activity are:

1. Protecting Medicaid and the health safety net

Medicaid is a key financial backstop for Jewish social services, with revenue from this program funding an estimated \$6 billion in programs at Jewish hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living entities, group homes, JFS and JVS agencies. Congressional and Administration efforts to “repeal and replace Obamacare” would dramatically transform this program, potentially resulting in \$1 trillion in cuts over ten years and significant reductions in funding to Jewish social service agencies. JFNA has written to House leadership to express our opposition to the Medicaid provisions in the health care plan, which the House will likely vote on tomorrow (3/23). We intend to continue to lobby the Senate, where we believe there may be some ability to push back against threats to Medicaid.

2. Safeguarding Jewish community from terrorism

JFNA has taken a leadership role in efforts to strengthen bipartisan support in the House and Senate for increased funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), which is one of our priority issues. The temporary stop-gap spending bill (referred to as a Continuing Resolution) that Congress enacted in December is set to expire in April. Given the unprecedented wave of anti-Semitic incidents since January 1st, there are now multiple efforts in the House and Senate to boost the current \$20 million level of NSGP funding to between \$25 and \$50 million, as well as to expand the program to include smaller at-risk communities.

In response to the increased risks to the Jewish community, JFNA’s Washington office has led efforts to increase the visibility and concern for nonprofit security by lobbying both the Administration and Congress. As a result, in an era when bipartisanship is sorely lacking, our JFNA team was instrumental in securing the support

of all 100 Senators, who signed a recent letter to Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly, and FBI Director James Comey, expressing solidarity with and concern over the recent spate of Jewish threats.

JFNA is considered the subject matter expert on these issues. William Daroff testified before a House committee on the importance of the NSGP program as part of the nation’s emergency preparedness system.

3. Sustaining services for most vulnerable

JFNA is taking a leadership role in opposition to the massive cuts in “discretionary” human services that appear to be contained in the administration’s budget framework. Threatened reductions in the Administration’s budget could significantly reduce funding for JFNA priority programs such as the Emergency Food and Shelter program and the Social Services Block Grant, and would result in significant cuts to group homes for persons with disabilities. We issued a memorandum and action alert to the field that contained a more comprehensive discussion of the threats and perils of the administration’s budget, and a discussion of what JFNA is doing, in larger coalition activity, to address many of the threatened areas.

4. Maximizing support for charitable organizations

JFNA has focused significant effort to explain to Congress and the new Administration why the charitable tax deduction is so important. The interaction of provisions in the House of Representatives’ “Better Way” comprehensive tax reform plan would have a negative impact on tax incentives for charitable giving. In fact, according to some experts, the doubling of the standard deduction and elimination of many itemized deductions (other than charitable contributions), along with the decrease in tax rates and the elimination of the estate tax, could combine to decrease charitable giving by as much as 20 percent. I am

stating the obvious when I say that the impact to our Federation system of such a reduction in charitable giving would be very harmful. JFNA and other major charities are working to alert members of Congress to this potential catastrophic outcome and are proposing revisions, such as a universal or above the line charitable tax deduction, as well as increases in the annual deductible amount and carryforward provisions.

We are continuing to do what we can to ensure that key instruments for charitable giving, such as donor advised funds, are preserved and protected from change, and we are working in coalition with other interested organization to avoid changes to the Johnson Amendment, which prevents nonprofits from intervening in elections or using their resources to support or oppose political candidates.

5. Promoting JFNA’s international interests

JFNA wrote a private letter, along with the Conference of Presidents, to the president and secretary of state encouraging the administration to provide continued support for the State Department Office of the Special Envoy Monitoring and Combatting Anti-Semitism.

We are also working with the Israel Action Network on several pieces of legislation on Capitol Hill that deal with BDS and anti-Semitism.

6. Preserving education opportunities:

Our public policy priorities state that JFNA supports “public education while cultivating healthy, vibrant, and affordable Jewish day schools.” A new DPGA task force on school choice convened to discuss what Federations’ position on educational funding should be. Traditionally, federations and JCRCs believed that the separation of church and state propelled us to oppose public support for private schools (including day schools). But as Supreme Court doctrine has shifted over the past two decades, and with greater attention being given to the high cost of Jewish living, and a universal recognition of

the importance of Jewish day schools to our community and our future, many federations have supported local and state efforts to increase public financial support for private and parochial schools. With the new Congress and White House, federal “school choice” or “voucher” legislation is likely. The task force will assess where the federation community stands on these issues, and will work to develop a proposed consensus position for consideration by our Federation community.

7. Empowering older adults to age with dignity and an enhanced quality of life

JFNA is working with HHS and the Administration for Community Living to provide supportive services to Holocaust survivors and technical assistance for agencies that promote “person-centered, trauma-informed care” to those survivors. JFNA has worked with members of Congress to ensure that \$2.5 million for this program is included in appropriations bills for FY 2017, and that additional support is provided for FY 2018.

Along with the Leadership Coalition on Aging Organizations, JFNA is working to address funding threats in Congress to critical programs utilized by Federation partner agencies like the Older Americans Act, which supports elder meal programs, and Section 202 Housing for Seniors, and Section 5310 at the Department of Transportation, that pays for buses and vans to transport the elderly and people with disabilities.

8. Advocating on disability/inclusion issues

JFNA convened Jewish Disability Advocacy Day in February, bringing together close to 200 participants to spend a day on Capitol Hill to advocate for and with community members with disabilities. This program -- which is the seventh that we have brought to the Hill -- was significantly larger than those of past years.

JFNA continues to be a lead voice in opposing the ADA Education and Reform Act, which threatens to undermine significantly the Americans with Disabilities Act.

REBUILD. REVIVE. REINVENT JEWISH LIFE? YES, WE CAN!

At home, Federation subsidizes costs so children and teens can connect with their Jewishness at school and summer camp. Birthright trips transform young adults' relationship to Israel. Around the world, in places where the Holocaust and Communism almost wiped out Jewish life, we're nurturing the efforts of a core of inspiring young people who are reinventing Judaism.

Your Federation gift helps make all this possible.



Visit www.readingjewishcommunity.org or return the form below to donate today!



THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE.
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

www.readingjewishcommunity.org
Jewish Federation of Reading
PO Box 14925, Reading PA 19612
610-921-0624

Please detach and return with payment to Jewish Federation, PO Box 14925, Reading PA 19612

I want to help Federation make wishes come true this year. Here's my tax-deductible gift to support Jewish Federation of Reading's Annual Campaign and make a world of difference both near my own home and beyond:

Name _____ Address _____
\$ _____ amount enclosed Checks payable to Jewish Federation of Reading
Credit Card: ___ Discover ___ Mastercard ___ Visa Card # _____ Exp. date _____ Security Code _____
Name on Card: _____ Signature _____

Gardening with Vicky

Spotted lanternfly a growing concern

By Vicky Sokoloff

Since it was first identified in Berks County the spotted lanternfly has spread exponentially. The quarantine area is constantly being expanded. The most recent update (March 28, 2017) can be found on the Berks County Horticultural Club website at www.berkshortclub.org/spotted-lanternfly.htm

It's spring! Time to head out to the garden center. But before you go, take a good look at the quarantine

map. Many garden centers are in the zone. So before you buy anything, ask what they are doing to prevent the spread. If all you get is a blank stare, you might want to shop somewhere else.

Many of us share plants and other garden items with friends and family. Can you still do that if you live in the quarantine zone? Yes. But you must follow inspection procedure. That means carefully checking the plant and the pot –inside and out. Look

for insects and egg masses. The lanternfly does not always look like the bright picture used in much of the early publicity. It has a very different appearance in it's early stages. Even the adult with wings folded looks quite different.

You can print the proper form with pictures of the various stages at www.agriculture.pa.gov/Protect/PlantIndustry/spotted_lanternfly/Documents/SLF%20Checklist%2011-12-2014.pdf

Sign the form and carry it with you. The inspection requirement also applies to any items used or stored outdoors: tools, pots, fire wood, garden furniture, decorative stone, and much more.

If someone has offered to share plants or other outdoor items with you, ask if they are in the quarantine zone. If so, be sure they have followed the proper procedure to protect yourself from introducing this pest into your own landscape.

Spielberg's Jewish roots

Aish.com

The newly released biography, "Steven Spielberg: A Life in Films," by Molly Haskell, delves into the Jewish life of the iconic director and the impact of his childhood on his countless award-winning films.

Years ago, right before the release of "Schindler's List," Spielberg spoke openly about his Jewish roots and about his hopes for his own children. As a child, the Spielbergs moved from Ohio to Arizona to California, and they were often the only Jewish family in the neighborhood. "I was embarrassed, I was self-conscious. I was always aware I stood out because of my Jewishness," Spielberg recalled. "In high school, I got smacked and kicked around. Two bloody noses. It was horrible."

The Spielbergs had lost family in the Holocaust; they had a number of relatives who had died in Poland and Ukraine. And at the age of 46, Spielberg took a courageous step in his own Jewish journey by mustering the courage to go back into the pain and darkness of the Holocaust with the making of "Schindler's List." He had been offered the project 10 years earlier, but he didn't feel ready to take on the enormous emotional and spiritual challenge.

The choice to make the film came at a time in Spielberg's life when being Jewish began to take on more of a personal focus. At that point, Steven was the father of five children and he wanted them to be raised with a strong Jewish identity.

With "Schindler's List" he decided to create something "that would confirm my Judaism to my family and myself." "I'm getting older, maybe that's the most honest way to put it," said the filmmaker. "When my children were born, I made the choice I wanted them to be raised as Jews and to have a Jewish education."

His second wife, Kate Capshaw, converted to Judaism. Soon afterwards, the doorways of all of Spielberg's homes and offices had mezuzahs affixed to them. And Spielberg built a separate kosher kitchen in the basement of his Los Angeles home where his mother, Leah Adler, cooked holiday meals for the family. His mother often spoke about

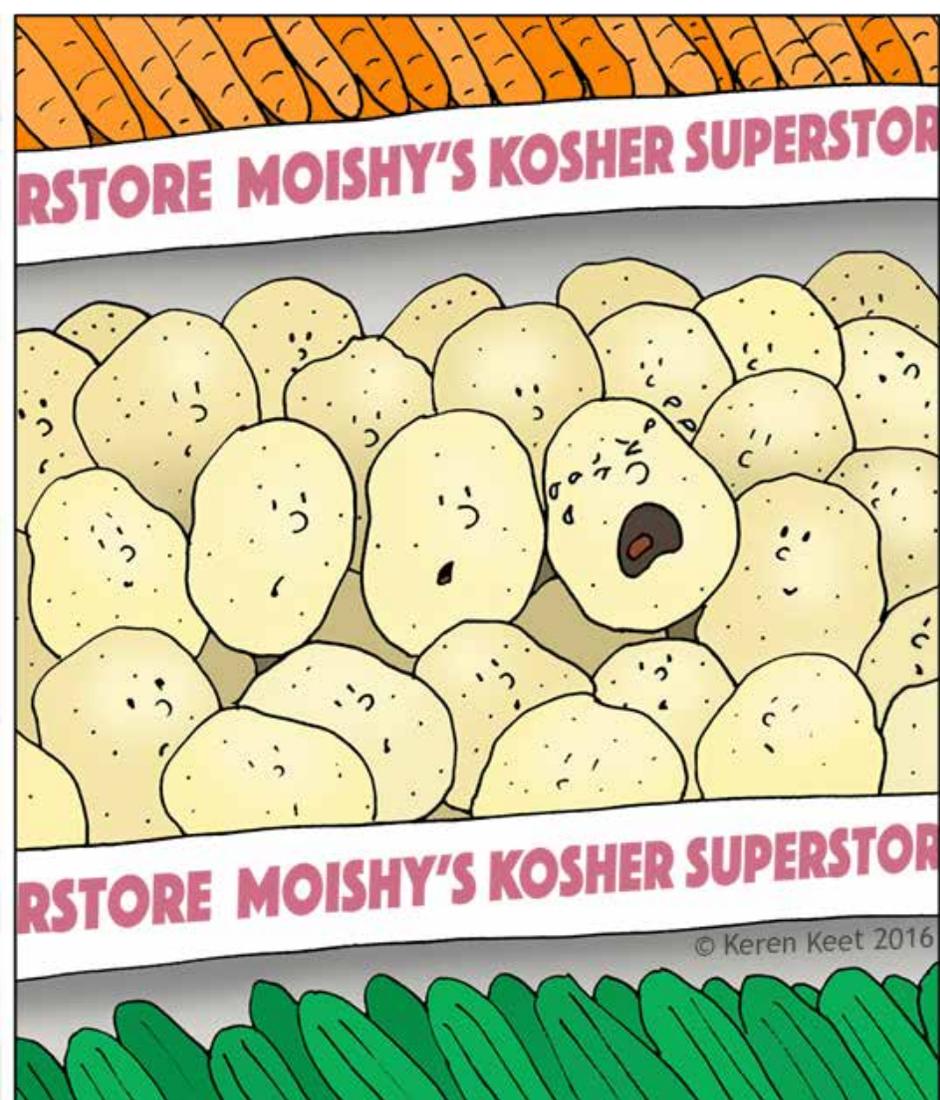
how Steven wasn't a great student or very popular, but that even as a child he always saw things differently than anyone else. Steven recalled how his mother would speak to him about the Holocaust even when he was little. "When I was very young, I remember my mother telling me about a friend of hers in Germany, a pianist who played a symphony that wasn't permitted, and the Germans came up on stage and broke every finger on her hands. I grew up with stories of Nazis breaking the fingers of Jews."

In Ohio, Spielberg's grandmother taught English to Holocaust survivors. Steven spoke about how he learned his numbers from an Auschwitz survivor who used the tattoo burned on his arm to teach the young Spielberg.

"He would roll up his sleeves and say, 'This is a four, this is a seven, this is a two,'" Spielberg recalled. "It was my first concept of numbers. He would always say, 'I have a magic trick.' He pointed to a six. And then he crooked his elbow and said, 'Now it's a nine.' In a strange way my life has always come back to images surrounding the Holocaust. The Holocaust had been a part of my life, just based on what my parents would say at the dinner table. We lost cousins, aunts, uncles."

Today Spielberg has seven children and three grandchildren, and he says making "Schindler's List" was the turning point when he decided to create something "that would confirm my Judaism to my family and myself." He still speaks today about how his wife's conversion to Judaism before they were married in 1991 renewed his commitment to Judaism and to his children's Jewish education. It was at that point that the Spielberg family began to observe all the Jewish holidays and light candles on Friday night. They gave their children bar and bat mitzvahs, and Spielberg has raised them with a love for Israel and a strong connection to their Jewish roots.

Spielberg has raised his kids with a love for Israel and a strong connection to their Jewish roots and has spoken openly and frequently over the years about his support for Israel and his dedication to continuing Holocaust education.



"I just explained 'kugel' to him."

B"H

Traditional Foods

WITH A MODERN TWIST

The Art of Knish Making

Take 2

Join us with your friends for the art of knish making. We will make knishes with several fillings. All participants will go home with delicious ready-to-eat products.

SUNDAY, MAY 21, AT 5 PM
 At Chabad Lubavitch
 2320 Hampden Blvd

COST: \$12.
 PLEASE RSVP BY MAY 17 TO 610-334-1577
 OR LIPSKERREADING@AOL.COM

Jewish Family Service

United Way



Important information about cancer

By Sari Incledon, M.Ed.

On April 2 our community held two programs featuring information on the Jewish genetic link to breast and ovarian cancers. Melissa Rosen, Director of National Outreach for Sharsheret, (a national nonprofit that supports women and their families facing breast cancer) presented two informative programs; one for medical professionals and the other for the general public. Melissa also gave Jewish Family Service packets of information that we will give out to interested parties. Everyone in attendance learned a great deal. Here is some information that I learned.



Melissa Rosen

- Researchers have found that 1 in 40 people of Ashkenazi Jewish descent carries an altered BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 gene, as compared with 1 in 350 individuals in the general population.
- The proportion of hereditary breast cancer and ovarian cancer is higher in women of Ashkenazi descent and both men and women with a family history of these cancers may want to consider genetic counseling and testing.

The principal cancers associated with the BRCA mutations are breast cancer and ovarian cancer. However, depending on which gene is involved, there are small associated risks for melanoma, pancreatic, prostate and perhaps uterine cancers. Screening for these associated risks should be discussed with a certified genetic counselor or health care provider.

To learn more about this topic and about genetic counseling call me to ask for a copy of an informative booklet – “Your Jewish Genes – Hereditary Breast Cancer and Ovarian Cancer”.

JFS thanks Vicky Sokoloff for her many efforts to bring these programs to



SHARSHERET

Your Jewish Community Facing Breast Cancer

Sharsheret programs include:

- **Peer Support Network**, connecting women who are newly diagnosed, survivors, or at high risk of developing breast cancer or ovarian cancer with others who have faced similar diagnoses and experiences
- **Genetics for Life**, addressing hereditary breast cancer and ovarian cancer with information and guided genetics conversations
- **Busy Box**, resources and personalized boxes of toys and games for parents facing breast cancer or ovarian cancer while raising young children
- **Embrace**, supporting women living with advanced breast cancer and ovarian cancer through one-on-one counseling sessions and tailored resources
- **Health Care Symposia**, teleconferences and webinars on topics unique to younger women facing breast cancer and ovarian cancer and those at high risk

STAY CONNECTED

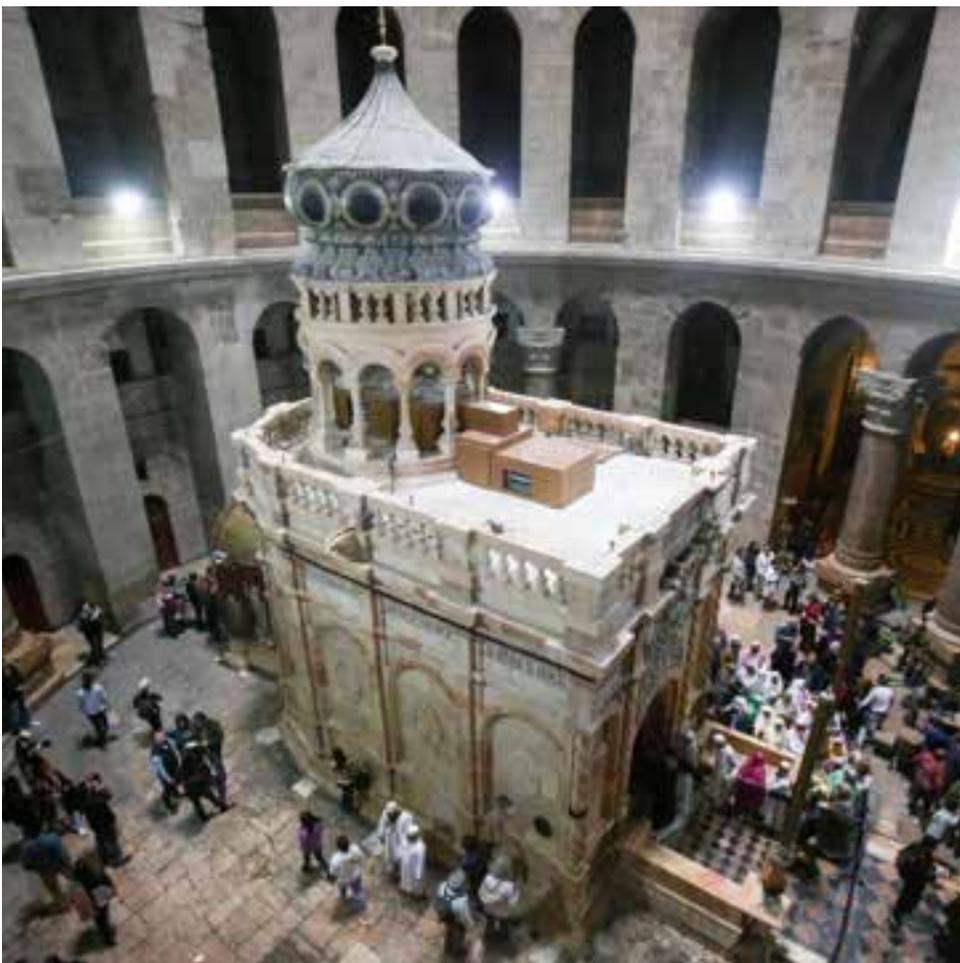
866.474.2774 | www.sharsheret.org | info@sharsheret.org | facebook.com/sharsheret.org | @sharsheret

our community. We also thank Breast Cancer Support Services of Berks and McGlinn Cancer Institute for co-

sponsoring these events.

The box above describes a few of Sharsheret's distinctive programs.

Site of Jesus' tomb restored



It took nine months and some \$4 million for a Greek conservation team to restore the tomb in which Jesus's body is believed to have been interred after his crucifixion. Today, the public could watch online an official unveiling ceremony at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem's Old City.

"If the intervention hadn't happened now, there is a very great risk that there could have been a collapse," Bonnie Burnham of the World Monuments Fund told Associated Press. "This is a complete transformation of the monument."

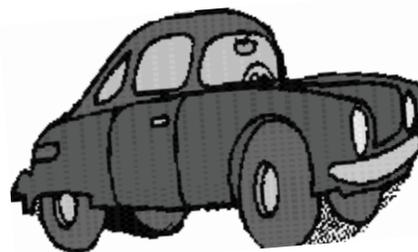
The historic renovation of the shrine was completed by a team of Greek scientists and restorers from the National Technical University of Athens.

In October 2016, the scientists removed a marble slab, that they said hadn't been moved since at least 1555 CE. This allowed the researchers to examine what they said was the original Holy bed with a cross carved into its surface.

"We didn't dismantle the monument, we didn't jeopardize its structural integrity. We just restored it," Professor Antonia Moropoulou, who lead a team of 50 scientists from the National Technical University of Athens, told NBC News. "Now you can see the colors, the texture of the stone, you can see the letters of inscriptions, the frescos, the different styles of mural paintings. So here is a monument that was worshipped through the centuries and will be worshipped forever."

Enjoy Tax Benefits While Contributing to

Jewish Family Service Vehicle Donation Program



Call Sari at 610-921-0624,
e-mail sari@jfreeding.org
or go to
www.charitableautoresources.com

Jewish Family Service Food Pantry Collection



We are serving more families each month! Please bring donations of canned tuna, soup, fruits and vegetables to the JCC. Thank you!

We also need plastic and paper grocery bags!

Mother's Day Tea & Portraits

Sunday, May 7 • 10:00am

We're honoring mothers on this very special day!

Bring your mother for tea, finger sandwiches and dessert, and receive a complimentary professional portrait.

RSVP to Eric or Jill by calling 610-616-5112.



LIFETIME RENT FREEZE ~ CALL NOW!

MANOR AT
MARKET SQUARE

INDEPENDENT LIVING & PERSONAL CARE WITH NO BUY-IN FEES!
803 Penn Street, Reading, PA 19601 • www.manoratms.com



Federation Honorial - Memorial Card Information

Please mail your payment with complete information to the Jewish Federation, PO Box 14925, Reading, PA 19612-4925 or bring to the Jewish Cultural Center, 1100 Berkshire Blvd, Suite 125, Wyomissing. You may set up a "savings account" for the purpose of sending cards. Please contact the Jewish Federation at 610-921-0624 for further information.

Contributions as of April 14

Jewish Family Service

Get well/speedy recovery:

- Margaret Levine – Louise Zeidman
- Rosalyn Yashek – Louise Zeidman

In memory of:

- Rena Godshall (Karen Kabakoff's mother) – Sharon and Ron Berman
- Mildred Lickstein – Marcia and George Eligman

Federation Jewish Community Campaign

In honor of:

- Sharon and Julian Syret's 50th anniversary – Anzie and Edward Golden

In memory of:

- Albert Boscov – Marcia Gross

Honorials and Memorials

Contributions may be made to the following Funds:

Federation Jewish Community Campaign	\$10
Jewish Family Service	\$10
Leo Camp Lecture Fund	\$10
JFS Food Bank	\$25
JFS Taxi Transportation Program	\$25
Holocaust Library & Resource Center	\$18
Doris Levin Fund	\$10
PJ Library Fund	\$10
Harry & Rose Sack Fund	\$10
Evelyn Thompson Fund	\$10

Sue B. Viener Memorial Fund (PJ Library)

In honor of:

- Joe Viener's special birthday – Sue and Herb Wachs

Evelyn Thompson Nursery School Fund

In memory of:

- Rena Godshall (Karen Kabakoff's mother) – Beth and Bob Caster, Doris and Elliott Leisawitz
- Mitchell Levinson – Beth and Bob Caster

Israeli water conservation device wins another prize

Israel21c.com

Jerusalem-based BwareIT picked up another trophy for BrighTap, its smart water meter sensor that monitors water temperature and consumption. The product won the innovation award at the UK Water Efficiency Product Awards 2017 at the House of Lords in London on March 7. The awards are sponsored by Waterwise, an independent, nonprofit group promoting water efficiency in the UK and Europe.

BrighTap, an Internet of Things (IoT) meter, attaches to any standard water tap, pipe or hose to display water consumption and temperature in real time. It also stores that information for tracking through a monitoring system. The device is powered by the water that runs through it.

BwareIT was the only Israeli company in the running for the awards, which are sponsored by Waterwise, an independent nonprofit group promoting

water efficiency in cooperation with water authorities in the UK and Europe. There is great demand for BrighTap in Europe, said BwareIT CEO Konstantin Berezin, speaking to ISRAEL21c from the Global Entrepreneurship Congress in Johannesburg.

One UK region is interested in a BrighTap pilot soon, as the British government is supporting water conservation efforts. "They believe in our product and the concept of educating

consumers about water consumption," says Berezin. The product is expected to be commercialized this year, possibly in partnership with a European company. BwareIT is seeking investment and is beginning a pilot project next year in Israel. Last June, BwareIT was one of six Israeli companies handpicked by the US State Department and White House to take part in the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Summit at Stanford University.

Pulling water from air; making calls without touch

Israel21c.com

At the Israel Innovation Showcase at the annual AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, more than 18,000 Israel advocates learned about a technology to extract water from air; an Arab-Israeli business accelerator; a touch-free smartphone; a user-friendly security system for public venues; and a dance program breaching barriers between Jews and Arabs in northern Israel.

Elliot Brandt, AIPAC Managing Director of National Affairs, said the showcase exemplified the Israeli "mindset of unrelenting determination to overcome all barriers and conventional thinking ... to defend and protect and heal and transform the world."

To kick off the showcase on March 26, Prof. Alan Dershowitz introduced Water-Gen of Rishon LeTzion, whose patented GENius technology generates clean drinking water from the air.

Water-Gen's "plug and drink" Atmospheric Water Generator, said to be the world's most energy-efficient module of its kind, can serve the water needs of

single households to entire countries, requiring only electricity or solar power.

Water-Gen's medium-size unit provides 450 liters of clean water daily. Photo: courtesy

According to the World Health Organization, tainted water is one of the factors causing 1.7 million children annually to die during their first five years. Water-Gen also has portable water filtration solutions for emergencies and relief efforts, including Spring, a lightweight battery-operated system.

This April, Water-Gen is launching its first pilot study in Miami-Dade County, Florida, which will be analyzed as a prototype for additional US locations. "Water-Gen is focused on improving the quality of life for billions worldwide who suffer from inaccessibility to safe drinking water and thus saving millions of lives," said Dershowitz, who noted that "no country in the world has contributed more to lifesaving technology in a mere 69 years than the nation of Israel."



EVERYTHING'S RELATIVE

by Jordan B. Gorfinkel • www.jewishcartoon.com



Good News Israel: Spotlight



Asian countries welcome Israeli early-learning program

Israel 21c.com

Young families in South Korea and China will now be able to access HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents and Preschool Youngsters), an Israeli-developed early learning program already reaching 20,000 families at 440 program sites in countries including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, Israel, Liberia, New Zealand, and the United States. HIPPY-inspired programs also operate in Denmark, Finland, Holland, Sweden and Turkey.

HIPPY partners with parents to prepare kids for success in school, particularly targeting children disadvantaged by poverty, limited education and language deficits. HIPPY peer parent educators from the community make home visits to provide 30 weeks per year of culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum activities and books directly to parents.

HIPPY originated in 1969 and was developed by Dr. Avima D. Lombard, a researcher at the NCJW Research Institute for Innovation in Education at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Lombard started an early education program in Israel that aimed to teach parents with limited formal education to be their children's first teachers for better future success in school. Research has shown that children who

participated in the HIPPY program at age 3, 4 or 5 appear to benefit long-term in their scholastic achievement.

Expansion to South Korea and China was facilitated by an agreement signed by Yissum Research Development Company, the technology-transfer company of the Hebrew University, with Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) in China and Lolo Educational Services (LES) in Korea. In these Far East countries, the HIPPY model was expanded and transformed to better serve upper- and middle-class populations. Professional teachers will train the parents, and the goal is to bring the children to a higher level of academic success.

The Korean program will begin with a six-month pilot involving 100 parents in three sites in Seoul. The official launch of the program is planned for late summer of this year. "HIPPY has been steadily growing worldwide over the last 10 years. South Korea and China are the first programs in Asia where we will be adapting the core program model for a very different and more highly educated consumer," said HIPPY International Director Miriam Westheimer.

DJ Dongjun Lee, CEO of Lolo Educational Services, commented, "We were very impressed by the



proven added value that HIPPY offers in preparing children for school and studies. I hope HIPPY can help Korean parents to better understand the benefits and importance of their involvement in their children's education and that our partnership will bring a new wave of parent involvement to the Korean education market." ASDAN China CEO Yichan Yuan added, "Today, we declared our commitment to work together with HIPPY to help preschool children reach high-quality education at home, benefiting them in the long run. "As a

country with a large population, there are currently hundreds of millions of preschool children in China. Parents are willing to prepare their children for school by educating them at home; however, they lack of informative guidance makes it extremely difficult for them to succeed in this task. "The collaboration between HIPPY and ASDAN China will provide parents with the support and information they need in order to help their children excel in school. We believe that this initiative can have a big impact on education of children in China," Yuan concluded.

Asian countries welcome Israeli early-learning program

By Barney Breen-Portnoy

Over the past two and a half decades, the Caucasus nation of Azerbaijan — a Shiite Muslim-majority state — has become a close ally of Israel, manifested by deep economic and military bonds.

In December, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Baku, where he met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. "The world sees so much intolerance, so much darkness, and here is an example of what relations can be and should be between Muslims and Jews everywhere," Netanyahu said at the time.

More recently Azerbaijani Ambassador to the U.S. Elin Suleymanov sat down for an interview with *The Algemeiner* at his country's embassy in Washington and talked about a wide range of topics, including Azerbaijan-Israel ties, the Azerbaijani Jewish community, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran and the Trump administration, among other things.

First of all, for readers who are not familiar with Azerbaijan, speak about your country's place in the world at the current moment in history.

"Azerbaijan is in a way very unique. You have a country on the shores of the Caspian Sea and it's the only country in the world which borders both Russia and Iran. On a map, if you move from the Arctic Ocean down to the Persian Gulf, there are only three countries — big Russia to the north, big Iran to the south and small Azerbaijan in the middle. The other thing is that Azerbaijan has historically always been at the crossroads of many cultures and empires. So it has a very diverse environment."

"We were the first-ever democratic republic in the Muslim world. We granted equal rights to vote for everybody, including

women and all of our minorities. We had a Jewish member of the cabinet in 1918, two decades before the great tragedy of the Holocaust in Europe. That speaks for itself."

"We have always positioned ourselves as a country which promotes dialogue and understanding between different cultures. We want to see the world as a cooperative place where it doesn't matter what your background is, but rather matters what you do."

"We work a lot with the Americans, and some with the Israelis, on defense and security issues. We work in Afghanistan. We were among the very first ones to help with the situation in Iraq after 9/11."

"And, of course, energy is important for us. We are building the very ambitious Southern Gas Corridor — a \$40 billion project that will deliver Azerbaijani gas to European markets."

How would you describe Azerbaijan? Western-oriented? Russian-oriented? Some other definition?

"It's clearly not Russian-oriented. Basically, with all of its influences, Azerbaijan is still a southeastern European nation. In essence, it is Western-oriented, if you think about its institutions and the secular nature of the state. But I believe, most importantly, what people don't understand is that Azerbaijan is Azerbaijan-oriented, because of our place in the world. Being in the Caucasus region, where so many things come together, it creates a unique sense of independence. So you can say Azerbaijan is Western-oriented, but with the caveat that the most important orientation is building an independent country."

How did the relationship between Azerbaijan — a Muslim-majority

state — and Israel — the world's only Jewish-majority state — develop?

"It's kind of sad that the relationship is surprising to some. We don't want it to be surprising, we want it to be normal. Muslims and Jews are very similar in many ways. I think the relationship between Azerbaijan and Israel actually preceded formal statehood for either one. We have a 2,500-year-old Jewish community in Azerbaijan, with both Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Jewish people have always been part of Azerbaijan's society. There is also a very strong Azerbaijani Jewish community in Israel. Haifa is now a sister city of Baku, our capital, and there are direct flights between Tel Aviv and Baku. When Azerbaijan became independent again (with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991), Israel was among the very first countries to recognize it. There are very strong economic, technological, medical, educational, agricultural, tourism and security ties. It's a mutually beneficial relationship."

"The ties are very multi-faceted. It's easy, even cliché, to say it's 'oil for guns.' Azerbaijan does provide over 40 percent of Israel's oil, its single largest supplier. And Azerbaijan also purchases some equipment from Israel, by the way not limited to security equipment. But that's not the whole story."

"I think we gain valuable expertise from Israel. We see Israel as a pragmatic partner and a good friend. They're very competitive with technology and the relationship is very good for us because we can diversify our supplies."

"For Israel, I think Azerbaijan is a good customer and a good provider of oil and gas. And as Israel develops its energy expertise, I think they can actually build on what we have, because Israel doesn't have a

longstanding energy tradition."

"Also, Israel is not just a Jewish state, it's a quite diverse country. So regarding how to manage diversity issues, we both can learn from each other."

"I respect the Israeli view that it needs to have more friends among Muslim nations. And Azerbaijan is a very good friend of Israel among the Muslim nations."

There has been a lot of talk recently about burgeoning behind-the-scenes ties between Israel and Arab nations across the Middle East. What are your thoughts on this?

"It's good. I'm very happy to see better relations between other nations and Israel. I'm hoping this will contribute to the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians."

What is Azerbaijan's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

"I think it's an issue that needs to be resolved. It is a serious problem. Maybe a Trump administration approach that is more inclusive and regional in nature, perhaps that will be better."

"We are supporters of the two-state solution. We want to see two states, a Palestinian state and an Israeli state living next to each other in peace. We fully respect Israel's right to existence and security. And at the same time, we strongly support the Palestinian right to have a state. We are very proud of both our relationship with Israel and our support for the Palestinian people. The Palestinians have certain rights which need to be protected. We try to contribute as much as we can to the dialogue. I was very happy to have both the Israeli ambassador and the PLO ambassador at our Hanukkah party in Washington, DC [in December]."