



MA'ALOT

TAKING STEPS TOWARDS RAISING ISRAEL AWARENESS

PROJECT RETROSPECTIVE 2009-2015

נפש Nefesh
בנפש B'Nefesh



Israel Committee
of
The United Synagogue
of Conservative Judaism

ISRAEL PROGRAM BANK FOR THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

Thanks to our partnership with Nefesh B' Nefesh, we have produced a significant Israel Program Bank for the Conservative Movement. It includes all the NBN Ma'alot Grant recipients from 2009 through 2015, supported by Nefesh B'Nefesh in the amount of a total of over \$300,000 in distribution. The Program Bank will address a need as expressed over the years.

To make it user-friendly, the reader will find two Indexes. The first Index will indicate subject according to pages. For example, someone needing examples of Yom Ha'Atzmaut programs can easily find the appropriate entries, each with title, program description and contact information for the synagogue(s).

The second index is by city and state, enabling one to reach out to recipients in his/her area. In all cases, copy me. If the contact information is outdated, I will locate the Rabbi currently serving the synagogue and provide new contact information.

Again this represents a significant first. We hope you will find it useful.
Looking forward to hearing from you.



Rabbi Paul Freedman

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USCJ Israel Committee

VISION:

The vision of the USCJ Israel Committee is to empower Jews in North America through the community of kehillot to fully engage with Israel. The vision is to facilitate and strengthen the connections between Conservative kehillot, the individuals therein and Israel such that Israel is integral to their identities and actions as Conservative Jews.

MISSION:

The Israel Committee's mission will include:

- To provide the kehillot and the Districts and Departments of USCJ with information, materials and programming concerning Israel.
- To offer user-friendly services to kehillot by facilitating contacts with existing agencies and resources.
- To assist, facilitate, and encourage our constituents to consider Aliyah and provide olim from our kehillot with a Conservative/Masorti contact in Israel.
- To develop support for other Israel-oriented agencies both internal and external to the Conservative movement.
- To strengthen the connection between Conservative kehillot in North America and the individuals therein and Masorti kehillot in Israel and the individuals therein.

For more information please contact us at:

freedman@uscj.org • www.uscj.org

Nefesh B'Nefesh

Since 2002, Nefesh B'Nefesh has been dedicated to revitalizing Aliyah from North America and the UK by removing or minimizing the financial, professional, logistical and social obstacles of Aliyah. Working in cooperation with the Israeli government, the Jewish Agency for Israel, Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael and the Jewish National Fund, Nefesh B'Nefesh has brought over 55,000 Olim to Israel.

For more information please contact us at

www.nbn.org.il • 1-866-4-ALIYAH • ari@nbn.org.il

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MA'ALOT

TAKING STEPS TOWARDS RAISING ISRAEL AWARENESS



Ma'alot Grants 2009 - 2010



Program in Review

Nefesh
בנפש
Aliyah: Live the dream



Israel Commission
of
The United Synagogue
of Conservative Judaism

In cooperation with
הסוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל
Jewish Agency for Israel



מדינת ישראל

Ma'alot Grants (2009-2010)

Overview

During 2009-2010, Conservative Jewish Kehillot throughout the New York, New Jersey and Upstate New York areas carried out various Israel-related programs with the help and support of Ma'alot, a program in partnership with Nefesh B'Nefesh designed to raise Israel Awareness.

Here are the communities and the names of their programs:

TEMPLE ADATH YESHURUN AND CONGREGATION BETH SHOLOM-CHEVRA SHAS

(Syracuse, NY)
Nesiya Tova, Syracuse

SUMMIT JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

(Summit, New Jersey)
Celebrate Israel

CONGREGATION AGUDATH ISRAEL OF WEST ESSEX

(Caldwell, New Jersey)
Building Bridges with Partner Communities in Israel

WESTCHESTER JEWISH CENTER

(Mamaroneck, NY)
Sh'ma: Hear My Story

TOWN AND VILLAGE SYNAGOGUE

(New York City):
Journey of Our Making: Jewish Teens Pull Together and Make a Trip to Israel a Reality

PELHAM JEWISH CENTER

(Pelham, New York):
Israel Faces and Places

TEMPLE BETH-EL

(Poughkeepsie, NY):
From Poughkeepsie to Jerusalem: Understanding Contemporary Israel

CONGREGATION NEVE SHALOM

(Metuchen, NJ):
Educational Israel program

TEMPLE BETH EL

(Somerset, New Jersey):
Artzeinu: Temple Beth El Celebrates Our Homeland

B'NAI SHALOM

(West Orange, New Jersey):
The Israel Experience at B'nai Shalom

The following sections provide in-depth descriptions of some of these impressive educational programs.

Temple Adath Yeshurun and Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas (Syracuse, New York)

Program: *Nesiyah Tovah*, Syracuse

The goal of *Nesiyah Tovah*, Syracuse was to bring the Syracuse Jewish community together for Israel-related education and programming. A total of 6 programs were conducted for adults and children of all ages. All were co-sponsored by Syracuse's two Conservative synagogues (TAY and CBS-CS), the Reform and Orthodox synagogues, the day school, the JCC, the Hebrew high school, Hillel, the young professionals group and community library, and each was hosted by a different community institution.

Programs:

1. The Community Library created an artist colony in *Tsfat*, where young families shared stories about Israel and created their own masterpieces.
2. Elementary school children found Israeli treasures in an archaeological dig, created sand art, and painted Israeli flag t-shirts in the social hall at Temple Concord, which was 'transformed' into Eilat.
3. Forty middle school students discussed the values of the Israeli army and then had fun playing IDF laser tag.
4. Congregation Beth Shalom Chevra – Shas and the Rabbi Jacob Epstein Hebrew High School hosted a Tel Aviv coffee house, where high school students watched a movie and discussed having the courage to live their dreams.
5. On April 19, the community came together at Temple Adath Yeshurun to mark the transition from *Yom HaZikaron*—Israel's Memorial Day—to *Yom Ha'Atzmaut*—Israel's Independence Day. This gathering featured a dance troop of children from the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and the area's religious schools, a falafel dinner and an Israeli music sing-along.
6. At the intergenerational Lag B'Omer BBQ, 250 participants of all ages listened to Israeli music (inside) and enjoyed the beautiful weather (outside) as they ate hamburgers, hot dogs and veggie dogs. While many people took advantage of the opportunity to socialize, there was organized kickball for the adults and children played games in the fields. The gym also was open, with pickup basketball and a bouncy slide for kids.

In total, approximately 630 people attended these events. Several families attended more than one event, and an estimated 500 community members attended at least one program. It was significant and exciting for the community that so many individuals and families were eager to join together to celebrate Israel.

Summit Jewish Community Center (Summit, New Jersey)

Program: *Celebrate Israel*

The Summit Jewish Community Center organized a special 'Celebrate Israel' weekend (April 30-May 2, 2009). The weekend featured programs for people of all ages, including a congregational youth service, early childhood programming, programming for teens and a special *kiddush* for the entire congregation. As part of the program, Yotam Zach, the local shaliach, visited the Summit JCC for a youth and teen program on Shabbat on May 1st. Yotam brought the big map of Israel from the MetroWest Federation and did some role playing exercises around it. Teens were shown a photo exhibit of Sgt. Lior Ziv z"l, an Israel army photographer, who was killed by a sniper while taking pictures. The photo exhibit captures many facets of army life. Yotam also spent time with the adults at the Shabbat service, sharing three of Sgt. Ziv's photographs and discussing aspects of life in Israel.

On Sunday, the congregation sponsored a special Israeli Holiday for families during religious school, which included an Israeli BBQ picnic, Israeli dance with a dance instructor, Israeli music/shira with a music instructor, Israel activities, stations for families and 'Write a Card to an Israeli Soldier' for the congregation.

Congregation Agudath Israel of West Essex (Caldwell, New Jersey)

Program: *Building Bridges with Partner Communities in Israel*

As part of the congregation's annual trip to Israel, members of Congregation Agudath Israel of West Essex, attended a Kabbalat Torah Dedication celebration in Hod HaSharon. In addition, they visited Kfar Vradim and attended an exciting groundbreaking ceremony for a new building for the Minyan HaMishpachti HaMasorti (Masorti Family Minyan). The ceremony took place in the presence of members of the community and its leadership, including the local mayor. During the ceremony, a young girl whose parents made Aliyah gave a moving speech about how much her participation in the congregation means to her.

During the visit to Israel, the group also went to see the latest developments in the Masorti community in Carmiel, a community that they've visited several times. They met with a couple who had just made Aliyah with Nefesh B'Nefesh and learned about their experiences of *klitah* (absorption), their absorption in Carmiel and their new synagogue.

In addition, an Israel program was held within the community on Lag B'Omer, consisting of an outdoor event in the town park. 175 members and 30 perspective members celebrated the holiday Israel-style with a BBQ, roasted potatoes, sack races, games and storytelling around the campfire.

Westchester Jewish Center (Mamaroneck, New York)

Program: *Sh'ma: Hear My Story*

The Westchester Jewish Center had a two-part program whose impact, the community hopes, will last far beyond this year. Ten teenagers registered to participate in an interview project with twelve senior citizens. In the first session a journalist, videographer and professional technology consultant provided an introduction to interview techniques. In the second session, teenagers learned how to conduct an interview and use the video equipment for best results.

The next week, the teens and seniors had dinner together. Throughout the course of the meal, two teens and one senior (or a married senior couple) would go into another room for a thirty-minute interview. The teens rotated tasks, interviewing some of the time, and working the equipment at other times.

Everyone enjoyed both the interview process and the social interaction that this program engendered. The interviews will be catalogued and maintained in the library for anyone to see.

Town and Village Synagogue (New York City)

Program: *Journey of Our Making: Jewish Teens Pull Together and Make a Trip to Israel a Reality*

On a Sunday morning on June 6, 2010 the documentary program “Journey of Our Making” premiered at Town & Village Synagogue to an enthusiastic audience of more than 75 people. While the event was primarily geared toward Hebrew school families, a number of other community members also came to the screening. The Ma'alot banner was prominently displayed there.

The morning began with an introduction from the director of Town and Village's Hebrew school, Shanee Epstein, who introduced both the program and the producer. The producer then spoke briefly and started the video. For 38 minutes, the audience, including kids from the Aleph class, paid close attention as they watched the story of the post bar/bat mitzvah class from a Jewish supplementary school in New York City that stuck together to learn about Israel and travel there, after a full year of profound community building.

The program ended with a rapid succession of images from the students' trip as they talked about their experiences and how this journey helped them – each in their own way – to create a bond with Israel. At the conclusion of the film, one student said “I love the land now...maybe someday I'll even move there.” Another student spoke about how he wants his little brother to have the same opportunity that a trip like this provides, and to “really learn to love Israel.”

The program was very well received and plans are being put in place to begin sharing it with other synagogues, schools and communities across the country. The community thanked Ma'alot for supporting this program and making it possible for them to carry the vision through to fruition.

Pelham Jewish Center (Pelham, New York)

Program: *Israel Faces and Places*

The Ma'alot grant was used to provide programming to support the synagogue's trip to Israel. The trip took place July 17 - 30, 2010.

A scholar in residence, Jared Goldfarb, came from Israel to prepare the congregation for the trip. Through lectures and a slide show congregants learned about modern Israeli history, culture and society. The congregants had opportunities to ask questions and clarify their thinking about Israel and to discuss their expectations about their trip.

A presentation was sponsored and presented by the Michael Levine Foundation for Lone Soldiers. Two former IDF soldiers spoke to the group about their work as soldiers and the difficulties they faced as non-Israeli IDF members, far from their families. Congregants were impressed with the sincerity of these young people and the sacrifices they made to keep Israel secure and safe. They also learned that the transition from the IDF into Israeli civilian society is difficult and soldiers need support.

A well-attended Yom Ha'Zikaron/Yom Ha'Azmout commemoration was hosted. Congregants were able to watch a movie about Israeli soldiers who had died for the country. The celebration of Israel Independence Day included a band, Israeli music and Israeli food. All of these events contributed greatly to the excitement leading up to the trip.

Throughout the trip, congregants kept a blog and collected pictures for a photo journal. This ongoing communication with people back home made Israel more of a reality for those who could not join.

The community plans to use the remaining Ma'alot funds to sponsor an event for the whole community that will give the travelers a chance to share their excitement about their experiences in Israel through stories, pictures and objects that they have brought home with them. This taste of Israel will begin the process of connecting more congregants to the wonders and riches of Israel's land and its people, and inspiring them to participate in future excursions.

Temple Beth-El (Poughkeepsie, New York)

Program: *From Poughkeepsie to Jerusalem: Understanding Contemporary Israel*

In 2009- 2010, Temple Beth-El presented a series of diverse programs about Israel and Israel advocacy. Program topics included:

- *Gilad Shalit - At any price? The Israeli Public Debate about Prisoner Exchange*
- *The Environment as a Bridge to Peace in the Middle East: The Arava Institute for Environmental Studies As a Case Study*
- *A Family Journey through the History of Israel with Yisrael Lazar*
- Film screenings: *Knowledge is the Beginning*, *The House on August Street* and *Souvenirs*

The reaction from the congregation was very positive and Beth El plans on continuing these programs next year.

Congregation Neve Shalom (Metuchen, New Jersey)

In the early fall, Congregation Neve Shalom held a program for adults called Touring Israel on a Shekel to introduce the community to ideas about traveling to Israel, and what to do once they get there. The program included both shorter and longer range visiting options.

In early January 2010, a program was held for college students and young adults about programs in Israel, including educational and volunteer opportunities and the Birthright program. A local shaliach spoke, and so did a student who had just returned from a year-long master's program in Israel.

In early May, more than 70 people came to a congregational *kumsitz* celebrating Lag B'Omer. Local professionals led the singing and dancing, there was an Israeli-style supper, and local USY students helped with the *ru'ach*.

Every month, an article in the congregation's bulletin introduces members to all sorts of information about Israel, including Israeli products available locally, Israeli newspapers available online and local events about Israel.

In addition, the congregation sponsored a trip to Israel for 45 members who had been selected by lottery and had never been to Israel before.

Lastly, an Israel coffee house was established in late winter, with entertainment and a virtual tour experience of Israel. Several laptops were set up with different topics about Israel.

Due to the success of all three programs, Neveh Shalom plans to repeat them.

Temple Beth El (Somerset, New Jersey)

Program: *Artzeinu: Temple Beth El Celebrates Our Homeland*

Temple Beth El of Somerset, New Jersey established a new Artzeinu program with the financial support of Nefesh B'Nefesh.

Thus far, the program has consisted of activities and lectures led by Lt. Amit Shuker of the Israel Defense Forces. Lt. Shuker, a former battalion commander who served in the Special Forces, brings with him a unique perspective on the geopolitical and security issues that Israel faces. His first lecture, 'Israel and the Geopolitical Situation', presented a general description of the various forces that work with and against the Jewish state, from Egypt in the west to Iran in the east. His second lecture, 'Israel and the Palestinians', focused on the complexities of the Palestinian question in light of the recent flotilla incident in the Mediterranean Sea. Both lectures, each two hours long, attracted a large number of people and were very well received.

Lt. Shuker also led two programs for the congregation's children, one for school-age children and one with the middle and high school contingent. Both programs involved active, hands-on demonstrations of what it takes to serve in the IDF.

The Artzeinu program undoubtedly has stirred a new awareness of Israel within the congregation and community.

B'nai Shalom (West Orange, New Jersey)

Program: *The Israel Experience at B'nai Shalom*

According to community members, the Maalot program for B'nai Shalom was both multifaceted and successful. The congregation held a conversational Hebrew course on beginner and intermediate levels. The community was able to enrich the program with an enhanced Israeli café, a *kumsitz*, and Israeli movies -- *Sallah Shabati* and *The Band's Visit* -- that were screened as part of the congregation's Israeli cultural programs. The synagogue used local *shlichim* to lead programs for teens and for *Hazak* meetings and they also made presentations to the entire congregation.

The congregation has been gathering Masorti resources that will be shared with members who plan to travel to Israel, to guide them in finding like-minded communities and synagogues to visit throughout the country.

Once a month on Shabbat, a class called Ha'Iton, which was led by some of the community's Israeli members, offered participants the chance to read Israeli newspapers and discuss them with each other.

A women's trip is scheduled to visit Israel in October. It will include study at the Conservative Yeshiva, mifgashim and study with female educators and members of Knesset, and a visit to a women's counseling center, as well as a day long Refuat Hanefesh, Refuat Haguf program for women. Nefesh B'Nefesh is a stop on their tour.

For more information about these programs, and/or,
apply for a Ma'alot Grant, please contact:

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Nefesh B'Nefesh: 1-866-4-ALIYAH | www.nbn.org.il

MA'ALOT

TAKING STEPS TOWARDS RAISING ISRAEL AWARENESS



Ma'alot Grants 2010 - 2011



Program in Review

Nefesh
בנפש B'Nefesh
Aliyah: Live the dream



Israel Commission
of
The United Synagogue
of Conservative Judaism

In cooperation with
הסוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל
Jewish Agency for Israel



Dear Friends,

The special partnership between the USCJ and Nefesh B’Nefesh, through “Ma’alot: Taking Steps Towards Raising Israel Awareness,” provides grants to our USCJ *Kehillot* for a variety of Israel activities. The first year of the program, ten pilot *Kehillot* were awarded grants. In 2010-2011, we are proud that 26 *Kehillot* received grants while this year, 2011-2012, with 96 applications submitted, your Districts and Regions selected 49 recipients.

There is a wealth of exciting programmatic detail available. To that end, we have set forth below brief descriptions of each of the 2010-2011 programs, including contact information. This will enable you to be in touch with the Ma’alot grant recipients in order to receive additional details. In this way, you will further enrich your *Kehillot’s* awareness of, and involvement with, Israel.

You are encouraged to be in touch with them. We would appreciate a copy of your correspondence.

Please feel free to contact us at any time for guidance and assistance.

B’Vracha,

Rabbi Paul Freedman
Director, Israel Commission
USCJ
freedman@uscj.org

Ari Schuchman
Director of Strategic Partnerships
Nefesh B’Nefesh
ari@nbn.org.il



Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, Executive Director of Nefesh B’Nefesh; Alexandra Cyngiser, International Vice President, Israel Affairs, USCJ; Rabbi Paul Freedman, Director, Israel Commission of USCJ during Alexandra’s visit to the Nefesh B’Nefesh office in Jerusalem, June 2011.

Sinai Temple Israel Center Advocacy Day

Sinai Temple, Los Angeles, CA

Sinai Temple, Los Angeles, CA organized a February Israel Advocacy Day, a day of learning to support Israel with special sessions for youth on media training and Israel advocacy on the campus. The keynote speaker was Rabbi Danny Gordis and attendance was spectacular!

Rabbi Nicole Guzik
nguzik@sinaitemple.org

Sinai Temple
10400 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90024
310-481-3246

Yisrael b'Koleinu, *Israel in Our Voice*

Congregation Kol Emeth, Palo Alto, CA

Congregation Kol Emeth, Palo Alto, CA : "Israel in Our Voice" invited synagogue members to record their Israel stories that are archived on the Kol Emeth website. In addition, members shared highlights of their personal Israel connection at synagogue Kiddushim culminating in a Shabbat celebration on June 4 with the Israel Deputy Consul General sharing his personal story. KE members traveled with our senior rabbi on a mission to Israel the following week. The project was multi-generational with both the volunteer "team" that implemented the project and those who recorded their Israel stories

Barbara Schapira
Yisrael b'Koleinu
Steering Committee Chair
bjschapira@gmail.com

Congregation Kol Emeth
4175 Manuela Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94306
408-737-1099

Israel's 63rd Yom Ha'atzmaut Celebration – May 15, 2011

Congregation B'nai Israel, Tustin, California

Congregation B'nai Israel (CBI) celebrated Israel's 63rd Yom Ha'atzmaut on May 15, 2011. We brought the magic of Israel to our congregants. We were fortunate to have with us representatives of Nefesh B'Nefesh (Ari Schuchman) and USCJ (Alice Greenfield). The program included informational booths about Israel's contributions to humanity (audio/video); JNF informational desk; a Moroccan booth with couscous and henna tattoos; a Bedouin tent with a Bedouin sharing stories of the desert and serving coffee; Israeli wine tasting; Israeli food and desserts; Israel's *Mahane Yehuda Shouk* with dried fruit, clothing and items from the CBI's gift shop; a Yeshiva with students engaged in study of Torah; a simulated Kotel where participants wrote a note (to be mailed to the Kotel in Jerusalem) and had an opportunity to lay Tefillin; a 24' rock climbing wall simulating the rock climbing of Ein Gedi; an archeological dig in a sand box where wooden puzzles were hidden for children to find and assemble; a Kibbutz life with *cheder ochel* (dining room), *mirpa'ah* (clinic), *pa'uton* (pre-school), *refet* (cow shed) and more; an entertainment program that included music, dancing, and a Jewish theme magic show. We had about 210 CBI members in attendance.

Sandy Klein, Executive Director
sklain@cbi18.org

Mike Mymon
Mr3m2001@yahoo.com

Congregation Bnai Israel Tustin
2111 Bryan Ave
Tustin, California 92782
714-730-9693

Beth Hillel & Eretz Yisrael: Strengthening The Connection

Beth Hillel Synagogue, Bloomfield, CT

Working with the Friends of the IDF Beth Hillel synagogue in Blomfield, CT was fortunate to have the opportunity to host two members of the IDF. The visit was highly successful and was attended by more congregants and guests since the High Holydays. The soldiers spoke of their background and experiences while serving in the IDF and why they chose to remain in the service for several years beyond those required.

Leon Carr
ldcbse@yahoo.com

Beth Hillel Synagogue
160 Wintonbury Avenue
Bloomfield, Ct 06002
860-243-2333

Ahavat Israel - אהבת ישראל

Adas Israel, Washington, DC

Adas Israel, Washington, DC, organized an “Ahavat Israel Weekend” as a celebration of their ties with the Masorti Movement, JNF, and their sister Israeli community - Beit Shmesh – as well as celebrating their 10th grade June 2011 trip to Israel. The weekend included a special Friday Night Service honoring the 10th Grade Class; an “Israeli” Friday Night Dinner prepared by 6 Cooks from Bet Shmesh in conjunction with the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington; four presentations by Rabbi Yoav Ende from Kibbutz Hanaton; a festive “Israeli” seudat shlisheet with our Young Professional Group; a panel discussion on “The Future of Diaspora-Israeli Relations,” featuring Peter Beinart, Steven Rosen, and Eli Lake; an Ahavat Yisrael Concert featuring Josh London for our youth; and an Israeli night at our Maalot High School Program featuring the 6 cooks from Bet Shmesh with the students preparing different Israeli delicacies under the guidance of the cooks.

Beth Ann Spector

Program Coordinator

Adas Israel Congregation

2850 Quebec Street, NW

Washington, DC 20008

202.362.4433

www.adasisrael.org

bethann.spector@adasisrael.org

The Beth Hillel Bnai Emunah Teen Israel Advocacy Club

Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah, Wilmette, IL

Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah, Wilmette, IL developed a 10-month Israel Advocacy Program aimed at its high school population, providing them with strategies, information and tools to present Israel in an effective way. It identified common inaccuracies and offered strategies for getting the facts to elected officials.

Chris Hermon

bhusyyouth@gmail.com

Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah

3220 Big Tree lane

Wilmette, IL 60091

847-256-2830

Israel Experience **חויית ישראל**

North Suburban Synagogue, Beth El, Highland Park, IL

North Suburban Synagogue, Beth El, Highland Park, IL, conducted three programs. A preschool virtual fantasy trip to Israel, experiential activities for the older age ranges, and a community-wide Spring Music festival on Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrating the connections to Israel through music and the arts.

Karen Raizen

kraizen@nssbethel.org

North Suburban Synagogue Beth El

1175 Sheridan Road
Highland Park, Illinois 60035
847-432-8900

Connecting KI with Israel, Zionism, and Masorti

Congregation Kehillath Israel, Brookline, MA

Congregation Kehillath Israel, Brookline, MA published a monthly Israel Affairs bulletin with sections on the Masorti movement in Israel, cultural and scientific achievements in Israel, a religious piece written by our Rabbi, and a schedule of upcoming Israel events at our Congregation and in the greater Boston area. The bulletin is available in print and online at <http://www.congki.org/israel>.

Jonathan Nassi

IsraelAffairs@CongKI.org

Congregation Kehillath Israel

384 Harvard Street
Brookline, MA 02446
617-734-9853

חייית ישראל - An Israel Experience: Jewish Life PhotoBlogs

Beth Israel Congregation in Owings Mills, MD

Beth Israel Congregation in Owings Mills, MD offered its teen congregants an opportunity to create a personal "Jewish Life PhotoBlog Journal". Students explored photography through a variety of Jewish themes such as Tzedakah, Jewish Art, Chesed, Prayer and other aspects of Jewish life. The participants completed their PhotoBlog with journal commentary.

Sheri Kanuth

biomyouth@comcast.net

Beth Israel Congregation

3706 Crondall Lane

Owings Mills, Maryland 21117

410-654-0800

Israel Through the Decades Honors: Celebrating Outstanding Achievements

Beth El Congregation, Baltimore, MD

Beth El Congregation, Baltimore, MD created a musical, theatrical, multi-media production entitled "Israel Through the Decades Honors", presented in March 2011, honoring the amazing decade-by-decade achievements of the State of Israel.

Hedy From

Chair, Israel Affairs Committee

hfrom@earthlink.net

Beth El Congregation

8101 Park Heights Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21208

410.486.3488

Michigan Israel Business Bridge

Congregation of Moses, Kalamazoo, MI

Congregation of Moses, Kalamazoo, MI organized a series of events, with businessmen and women from Ann Arbor to Benton Harbor as the target audience, aimed at promoting mutual economic benefits between Michigan and Israeli businesses.

Diane Fogel

fogeld47@tds.net

Congregation of Moses

2501 Stadium Drive

Kalamazoo, MI 49008

269-731-4615

Focus on Israel: The B'nai Amoona Israel Film Festival

Congregation B'nai Amoona, St. Louis, MO

Congregation B'nai Amoona, St. Louis, MO deepened the Israel engagement of its congregants through the cultural arts, using film as the primary medium. Three groups were targeted in three different showings – teens, young adults and their overall congregational members. Each showing was followed by a discussion.

Joan Wolchansky

jwolchansky@cajestl.org

Congregation B'nai Amoona

324 S. Mason Road

St. Louis, MO 63141

314.406.1214

Danny's Diary: A New Immigrant's Letters to America

The Morristown Jewish Center, Morristown, NJ

The Morristown Jewish Center, Morristown, NJ created a 'virtual new oleh' called David and featured monthly updates, including a virtual diary for 'David' and ending with a celebration of David's first year in Israel. There was also a special speaker from Israel who made Aliyah.

Melissa Weiner

Director of Lifelong Learning
Melissagweiner@gmail.com

Morristown Jewish Center

177 Speedwell Avenue
Morristown, NJ 07960
973-538-9292

Israel Experience in 4 Parts

Adath Israel, Lawrenceville, NJ

Adath Israel in Lawrenceville, NJ organized a 4 part Israel Showcase: The Faces of Israel - a Jewish community-wide fair, Understanding Israel, A Night at the Theater - Israel Movie Night, and The Press of Israel.

Hedda S. Morton

Director of Congregational Learning
Hedda@adathisraelnj.org

Adath Israel Congregation

1958 Lawrenceville Road
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648
609-896-4977 x14

Israel's Cutting-Edge Program of Intensive Jewish Study

The Jewish Center, Princeton, NJ

The Jewish Center, Princeton, NJ calls their year long program: "Connecting to Israel-Families of fallen Soldiers", interacting with a family from Ness Tzion via email, snail mail, Skype and other technologies plus a second program, "ELUL, a Cutting Edge Program of Intensive Jewish Study from Israel".

Gila Levin

glevin@thejewishcenter.org

The Jewish Center

435 Nassau Street
Princeton, NJ 08540
609-921-0100

Israel: Holy Land in the Lion's Den

Temple Beth El, Somerset, NJ

Beth El, Somerset, NJ invited IDF Lieut. Amit Shuker back to the congregation after his successful appearance last year, delivering the second part of his presentation on Israeli geopolitical and military affairs. He also led a new "Israel Achievements" program for their youth, giving them pride in what Israel has accomplished.

Rabbi Eli Garfinkel

rabbigarfinkel1@me.com

Temple Beth El

1489 Hamilton St.
Somerset, NJ 08873
732-873-2325
Fax: 732-873-3892
templebethelsomerset.org

Exploring the Torah through the Creative Arts

The Huntington Jewish Center, Huntington, NY

The Huntington Jewish Center, Huntington, NY created a series of workshops in direct collaboration with Communities in Israel which explore the Torah Portions utilizing the Creative Arts, such as Bibliodrama, Silk Painting, Shadow Theater, Mask-making and Inter-Plays with participation on both sides.

Elizabeth Yaari

elizabeth@elizabethyaari.com

www.Explora-Torah.com

631-935-2212

Huntington Jewish Center

510 Park Avenue

Huntington, NY 11743

Building Jerusalem

Hollis Hills Jewish Center, Flushing, NY

On Yom Yerushalayim, the Hollis Hills Jewish Center in Flushing, NY built its connection to Jerusalem one block at a time! With the help of the Building Blocks Jerusalem program, members of our community young and old used Lego to build a replica of the Old City. We learned that if Jerusalem was indeed destroyed because of a lack of Jewish unity, it could be rebuilt through Jewish cooperation!

Rabbi David Wise

lastcup67@aol.com

Hollis Hills Jewish Center

210-10 Union Turnpike

Flushing, NY 11364

718-776-3500

Remembrance and Celebration - Israel's Past and Future

New City Jewish Center, New City, NY

New City Jewish Center, New City, NY combined Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut enhancing the usual remembrances and festivities with stories from individuals who served in the IDF and are currently in the area.

Benjamin Lewis

Director of Congregational Learning
ben@newcityjc.org

New City Jewish Center

47 Old School House Road
New City, NY 10956
845 638 9600 x.115

Brooklyn Israel Film Festival

Kane Street Synagogue, Brooklyn, NY

Kane Street Synagogue, Brooklyn, NY conducted The Brooklyn Israel Film Festival, presenting three nights of award-winning and thought-provoking films and speakers, reaching out to hundreds of film fans from not only the congregation but also other parts of Brooklyn and the tri-state area. This year one of the nights of the festival was targeted to bringing in young Jewish adults with special programming.

Sara Porath and Hedda Kafka Grupper, Co-Directors

Sara Porath: sporath@gmail.com
Hedda Kafka Grupper: heddakgrupper@optonline.net

Kane Street Synagogue

236 Kane Street
Brooklyn, NY 11238
917-676-8490

Faces of Israel:

A film, a film maker and a journey to Israel's divided soul

Congregation Shaarey Tikvah, Beachwood, OH

Congregation Shaarey Tikvah, Beachwood, OH in seeking to promote religious pluralism in Israel, presented the film: "Faces of Israel" and also invited a Masorti rabbi as well as the producer, Amy Beth Oppenheimer to address the community.

Rabbi Ed Bernstein

rabbiecb@shaareytikvah.org

Congregation Shaarey Tikvah

26811 Fairmount Blvd
Beachwood, OH 44122
216-765-8300, x105

Israel Through the Arts

Beit Rayim Synagogue and School, Thornhill/Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada

Beit Rayim Synagogue and School, Thornhill/Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada ran a series of lectures entitled "Israel Through the Arts". The idea behind the series was to raise awareness of the Israeli way of life in its richness and complexity by looking at Israeli artists and by examining their creative works. Since art connects us to the culture and fabric of a society, this increased our knowledge beyond the immediate news items or current political agenda. Through these programs we also hope to enhance our love and appreciation for Israel and its people in a more realistic way.

Ehud Avitzur

admin@beitrayim.org

Beit-Rayim

118 Centre St. Suite 209
Thornhill, ON L4J 7R9
905-886-7796

קפה ועברית Café V'Ivrit

Congregation Neveh Shalom, Portland, OR

Neveh Shalom, Portland, OR ran "Café V'Ivrit", a monthly series of lectures and arts events conducted in Hebrew for adult Hebrew speakers, focused on Israeli history and culture. Café V'Ivrit is cosponsored by several local Jewish organizations, including Portland State University.

Mel Berwin

mberwin@nevehshalom.org

Congregation Neveh Shalom

2900 SW Peaceful Lane

Portland, OR 97239

503-246-8831 x139

The Breakfast Club

Congregation Agudath Israel, Saskatchewan, Canada

Congregation Agudath Israel ran a Breakfast Club, utilizing movies to stimulate discussion on Israel.

Ayelet and Ido Weissler

Areivim.sask@gmail.com

Congregation Agudas Israel

715 McKinnon Ave S

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 1H6

306.343.7023 x 4

Israel Night

Beth Zion - Beth Israel, Philadelphia, PA

This program was designed after the television show “*Amazing Race*”. After *Havdalah*, Students from grades two to six had an *Israeli dinner* under a *Bedouin Tent* with *Bedouin music* playing in the background. After dinner, students divided into several *k’vutzot* and gathered around a *room sized map of Israel* for an explanation of the program. Each student received an *Israeli hat*, a *team specific color bandana*, a *passport*, a *blank map of Israel*, and a *clue for the first leg of the challenge*. *K’vutzot* figured out *clues* leading to *different regions/cities in Israel*, performed *challenges* and *activities*, related to each area. Challenges were sometimes *K’vutzah* specific competitive against other *k’vutzot*. When a *k’vutzah* completed a challenge and an activity they received another clue for the next leg of the race. The game was located in different parts of the synagogue. *Each destination had pictures, information, and questions about that place*. When the *K’vutzah* answered six questions they proceeded to another place where they performed a challenge related to that specific learning experience. The evening was designed to be a competition, to keep the students motivated, with the underlying meaning to be a learning experience which involved both teamwork and cooperation. Every team was able to experience a different number of cities/regions depending on their own pace. With that said, the minimum regions reached was 5.

Cindy Kushner

principal@bzbi.org

Beth Zion - Beth Israel

300 S 18th Street

Philadelphia, Pa 19103

215-735-5148

Camp Tikun Olam

Heska Amuna Synagogue, Knoxville, TN

Heska Amuna Synagogue, Knoxville, TN supported a community-based cultural exchange for local teens, with their peers in the Hadera-Eiron region. The program ran a total of four weeks, two in Israel and two in the Knoxville area. The Israeli youth were brought to Conservative congregations in Nashville, Chattanooga and Atlanta.

Deborah Oleshansky

doleshansky@jewishknoxville.org

Heska Amuna Synagogue

3811 Kingston Pike

Knoxville, TN 37919

865-690-6343

Nefesh B'Nefesh

Since 2002, Nefesh B'Nefesh has been dedicated to revitalizing Aliyah from North America and the UK by removing or minimizing the financial, professional, logistical and social obstacles of Aliyah. Working in cooperation with the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency for Israel, Nefesh B'Nefesh has brought over 28,000 Olim to Israel.

For more information please contact us at:

www.nbn.org.il • 1-866-4-ALIYAH • ari@nbn.org.il

MA'ALOT

TAKING STEPS TOWARDS RAISING ISRAEL AWARENESS



Ma'alot Grants 2011 - 2012



Program in Review

Nefesh
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Dear Friends,

Through the special partnership between the USCJ and Nefesh B’Nefesh, our program entitled: “Ma’alot: Taking Steps Towards Raising Israel Awareness,” provides grants to our USCJ *Kehillot* for a variety of Israel activities. In the first year of the program, ten pilot *Kehillot* were awarded grants. In 2010-2011, we are proud that 26 *Kehillot* received grants while this year, 2011-2012, 49 recipients were selected.

Within the context of USCJ’s Strategic Plan, Ma’alot grants have enabled these kehillot to plan, organize and run unprecedented Israel programming and activities. Our 2012-2013 grant recipients are continuing in this tradition of excellence.

Below please find brief descriptions which present the highlights of these 2011-2012 programs. However, there is a wealth of detail available and we encourage you to be in touch with the program organizers to tap into these details. In this way, you will further enrich your *Kehillot*’s awareness of, and involvement with, Israel. We would appreciate a copy of your correspondence.

Please feel free to contact us at any time for guidance and assistance.

B’Vracha,

Rachel Russo
Chair
Israel Committee
USCJ

Rabbi Paul Freedman
Director
Israel Committee
USCJ
freedman@uscj.org

Ari Schuchman
Director
Overseas Programs
Nefesh B’Nefesh
ari@nbn.org.il



Howard Sniderman, *International Vice President, USCJ*; Debbie Sniderman; Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, *Executive Director, Nefesh B’Nefesh*; Rabbi Steve Wernick, *President & CEO, USCJ* & Rabbi Paul Freedman, *Director of the Israel Committee, USCJ* visiting the Nefesh B’Nefesh office in Jerusalem.

Talking about Israel from a Non-political Perspective

Congregation Bet Shalom, Tucson, AZ

This one-night program helped change the way Jews talk about Israel. The purpose of this talk and teaching session was to present a different kind of model for discussing Israel – one that isn't politically focused but, rather, presents Israel in a fuller, richer light by examining perspectives relating to Israeli history, Zionism and ideological/theological themes. Participants in this session examined diaries and letters of pilgrims from the 10th, 12th and 20th century, men and women who were not tourists, but who were pilgrims.

Rabbi David Ebstein also shared personal observations in general, with particular focus on Jerusalem. Hopefully, we have generated a new model for discussing Israel.

Sarah F. Frieden

Administrator

Congregation Bet Shalom

Tucson, AZ

520-577-1171

betshalom@comcast.net

Shira LA

Temple Beth Am, Los Angeles, CA

Just like in Israel, we celebrated an Erev Yom Haatsmaut event with a community-wide sing along, with printed texts, live music, song leaders, projected lyrics, Israeli food, and dancing. Our complete song book included Hebrew and English-transliterated lyrics of over 30 songs. We had over 200 people, some from the Temple Beth Am community, but most from the wider Israeli community who came to join in the only shira-b'zibur in town that night. We advertised in local restaurants, book stores, on Israeli television and the community calendar. Hopefully this will become an annual program at our Kehillah.

Daniel Sulzberg

Assistant Program Director

Temple Beth Am

Los Angeles, CA

310-652-7354 x215

dsulzberg@tbala.org

Volunteer Opportunities in Israel

Temple Beth Sholom of the Menifee Valley, Menifee, CA

We organized an evening program in which a variety of speakers came to promote programs in Israel which are affordable as well as include volunteer opportunities. Many members of the congregation are seniors with limited mobility,

Stuart Wald
Vice President

Temple Beth Sholom of the Menifee Valley
Menifee, CA
310-429-3354
stuart.wald@gmail.com

Yisrael b'Eyneinu, “Israel Through Our Eyes”

Congregation Kol Emeth, Palo Alto, CA

“Israel Through Our Eyes” was the sequel to “Israel in Our Voice”, Ma'alot 2010-2011 project.

The project included four components:

1. Collection of photographs depicting Israel experiences of Kol Emeth members, 880 photos from approximately 60 members.
2. Creation of an 80- page Art Photography Book which included at least one image from each contributor, organized by Scriptural citations.
3. 4'x3' Photo Mosaic Picture of the Kotel, using 6,500 photo “cells,” multiples of the 880 photos submitted, comprise this unique picture which now hangs in Kol Emeth's social hall.
4. PhotoMosaic Puzzle Night - 75 attendees of all ages participated in a fun evening of friendly competition.

Twenty teams assembled the PhotoMosaic of the Kotel and 1st, 2nd and 3rd place prizes were awarded.

Barbara Schapira

Israel Action Committee, Chair

Congregation Kol Emeth

Palo Alto, CA

408-737-1099

bjschapira@gmail.com



Israel Committee Program Series

Pasadena Jewish Temple & Center, Pasadena, CA

We held several programs, including: a visit by Tzofim(Isarel Scouts) to the synagogue and preschool; a town meeting with the Consul -General of Israel, a live video conference with Mark Lavie, Night Editor of the Associated Press, temporarily based in Cairo, and a debate between Rob Eshman & David Suissa of the L.A. Jewish Journal.

Jeffrey Landau

VP-Administration, Israel Comm. Chair

Pasadena Jewish Temple & Center

Pasadena, CA

818-952-9521

AJL4624@pacbell.net

Newlywed Trip to Israel

Congregation Beth El, San Diego, CA

Eight newlywed couples participated in a ten-day trip to Israel. They subsequently attended a follow- up evening to learn about Nefesh B'Nefesh, with discussions and impressions.

Rabbi Avi Libman

Associate Rabbi

Congregation Beth El

San Diego, CA

858-452-1734

rabbiavi@cbe.org

Write on For Israel: Film Festival Sneak Preview Featuring Kol Shofar Filmmaker, Julia Ulman Daniel

Congregation Kol Shofar, Tiburon, CA

BlueStar's 2nd Annual "For Israel Film Festival" sneak preview included meetings with the local teenage filmmakers who produce seven of these incredible documentaries. The "Write On For Israel" two-year educational program gives young people a background in Jewish and Israeli history and teaches them the critical thinking skills and tools necessary for them to become powerful Israel advocates, spokespeople and opinion leaders- before the campus years.

Tracy Rice Harding

Coordinator of Teen Education and Programs

Congregation Kol Shofar

Tiburon, CA

415-388-1818, Ext. 101

trice@kolshofar.org

Speaking of Israel

Adat Ari El, Valley Village, CA

Our programming was focused on students and was designed to prepare them for the Israel conversation on campus and to develop their leadership potential. There were three activities including a political/international relations briefing, an art/expressive project and a workshop session with an attorney for advocacy skills.

Deborah Silver

Rabbi

Adat Ari El

Valley Village, CA

818-755-3480

ravketana@gmail.com

Focus on Tzeirim - Young Adults

Congregation Agudas Israel, Saskatoon, Canada

We formed a group of young adults which met and continues to meet on a regular basis to socialize and learn about Israeli life & popular culture. Led by the Israeli Shlichim and local young leaders, the group's mandate was to establish rapport between members of the group, while forming the communities' next generation of Jewish leaders.

The Shlichim

The Shlichim (Director of Israel programs)

Congregation Agudas Israel

Saskatoon, Canada

1-306-343-7023 ext 4

areivim@sasktel.net

Israel Inside & Out

Congregation Beth Shalom, Clearwater, FL

The program consisted of eight sessions, using the Jerusalem Online University program, "Israel Inside & Out," and involving speakers and teachers from the community. 11th & 12th grade teens from five congregations were brought together to learn about Zionism and attitudes towards Israel on the college campus.

Tami Wolf

Director of Education and Congregational programming

Congregation Beth Shalom

Clearwater, FL

727-531-1418

bstami@tampabay.rr.com

HAGIGAT YISRAEL: A Yom Ha'atzmaut Celebration

North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park, IL

Our celebration of Israel's 64th birthday included the following events: Preschool Fantasy Trip to Israel, Museum Exhibit & Lecture: Archaeology and the Biblical Record, A Religious School Program: "Attractive Lands Map" and "When the Shark and the Fish First Met," by Gilad Shalit, Film Screening: "My Brother's Keeper," Explore Israel through Dance and Falafel Stand.

Rachel Kamin

Director, Cultural & Learning Center

North Suburban Synagogue Beth El

Highland Park, IL

847-432-8903 x242

rkamin@nssbethel.org



Torah from Zion: A Shabbat in the Style of the Bet Tefila Yisraeli

Mishkan Tefila, Chesnut Hill, MA

Rabbi Naama Kelman from Jerusalem led Friday night and Shabbat morning services in the style of the secular Israeli Shabbat services, conducted by the Bet Tefila Yisraeli. Services included popular music, poetry and study and a more inclusive and participatory style. Israeli and American materials were combined to produce a handsome booklet with prayers, songs, poetry and readings. The services provided an opportunity to introduce the Kehillah members to contemporary Israeli culture. Part of the grant was also used to subsidize an Israeli film series and book series.

Rabbi Leonard Gordon

Rabbi

Mishkan Tefila

Chesnut Hill, MA

617-332-2871

rabbi@mishkantefila.org

Kabbalat Shabbat B'Ivrit: Israeli Community Outreach

Temple Emeth, Chestnut Hill, MA

The goal of the program was to increase the involvement of the local Israeli population in synagogue programming, to promote interaction and integration between Israelis and Kehillah members, and to provide meaningful synagogue-based experiences which promote cultural exchange and facilitate the creation of closer relationships between these sectors of the synagogue population. We held three Kabbalat Shabbat in Hebrew with the following components: family learning, Shabbat dinner entertainment, a sing-a-long adult program including shiur, conversation, and a lecture with a specific theme. Our children's program included engaging Shabbat activity and took place simultaneously with the adult program.

In addition, the Chagim were celebrated with joint American-Israeli programming to which both communities were responsive. Collaboration was initiated with the Boston Israel Consulate which sponsored parts of our programming. We formed a focus group of young Israeli families aimed at determining their needs and how the Temple community could incorporate some of their ideas into planning for the next year.

Samara Katz

Director of Congregational Learning

Temple Emeth

Chestnut Hill, MA

617-469-9400

dcl@templeemeth.org

iConnect to Israel

Temple Beth Torah, Holliston, MA

Numerous Skype sessions took place between students at Temple Beth Torah and Kehillah Moriah, Haifa. These sessions will be continued in the coming year. Rabbi Haiyun from Haifa visited Holliston and led Community Torah Study, met with students and Sisterhoods via Skype. Conversational Hebrew sessions continued.

Wayne Domeier

Chair, Israel Action Committee

Temple Beth Torah

Holliston, MA

508-533-2980

wdomeier@comcast.net

Understanding Israel Through Dialogue

Congregation Kol Shalom, Annapolis, MD

The program consisted of monthly meetings attended by 10-20 Kol Shalom members, during which specific issues concerning Israel were discussed in a structured dialogue setting intended to make all participants feel comfortable regardless of their views or knowledge level. The purpose was to empower participants for Israel advocacy, enabling them to defend Israel in social/professional settings. This program remains ongoing.

Ira Rifkin

Israel Affairs Committee Chairman

Congregation Kol Shalom

Annapolis, MD

410.849.5272

ira.rifkin@verizon.net

Culmination of the “Beth El Sings” program

Beth El Synagogue, Saint Louis Park, MN

The Ma'alot grant primarily helped underwrite the participation of the artist in residence, Noah Solomon, for the culmination weekend. Nefesh b'Nefesh was publicized and mention made of Aliyah. Israel music was used specifically to elicit stories from the Holy Land.

Avi Olitzky

Rabbi

Beth El Synagogue

Saint Louis Park, MN

952-873-7300

ao@besyn.org

A Free Trip to Israel

Shaare Zedek Congregation, St. Louis, MO

Shaare Zedek took a Free Trip (virtual) to Israel, past and present, exploring Israel with live connections. This included Israeli history, culture, literature and connected with people in the Masorti movement in Israel.

Bob Olshan

Israel Committee Chairman

Shaare Zedek Congregation

St. Louis, MO

314-434-4260

olshanr@gmail.com



Ki Mitzion Tetze Torah

B'nai Amoona, St. Louis, MO

Leveraging the fact that the Rabbi was on Sabbatical in Jerusalem, studying at the Hebrew University and the Hartman Institute, we enabled him to share some of his learning with the various congregational groups (youth, adults, chavurot, formal classes, ad hoc interest gatherings) via the internet. The program was highly succesful and the virtual platform is one that has become a firm part of B'nai Amoona's educational endeavor. Quite a breakthrough!

Rabbi Carnie Rose

The Rabbi Bernard Lipnich Senior Rabbinic Chair

B'nai Amoona

St. Louis, MO
314-576-9990
ravroseba@aol.com

Cafe Ivrit

Temple Beth O'r Beth Torah, Clark, NJ

College -age students, who had taken their first steps towards raising Israel awareness by visiting their Jewish homeland, engaged others to connect with Israel through a series of social gatherings at "Café Ivrit." These gatherings provided an opportunity for the TBOBT Emissaries to reach out and encourage other Jewish adults to connect to Israel as they spent time together conversing in Hebrew, sharing photos and stories of their visits to Israel, dancing, and eating. These gatherings helped build solidarity and a sense of mishpacha among the group members. The focus of each gathering was to reinforce and maintain their connection to Israel, while encouraging others to connect with Israel in their turn.

Barbara James

Youth V.P.

Temple Beth O'r Beth Torah

Clark, NJ

908-456-3376

bjames018@hotmail.com



Step Up for Israel

Beth El Synagogue, East Windsor, NJ

Step Up For Israel, a 5-session multimedia course, provided an integrated understanding of Israel and its role in the Middle East. It was designed to create awareness of the growing movement to delegitimize Israel and motivate the community to advocate on Israel's behalf. The course featured live commentary from experts, including Ferne Hassan from AJC, Joseph Puder from ITAI, Rabbi Ken Spiro from Aish and Rabbi Eric Lankin from JNF.

Naomi Vilko

Board member

Beth El Synagogue

East Windsor, NJ

609-924-3225

Naomivilko@msn.com

Adopt a Lone Soldier

Adath Shalom, Morris Plains, NJ

Paul Kaye, former Lone Soldier, addressed the congregation and we then enjoyed an FIDF Concert. Care packages were sent to Lone Soldiers, packaged by the Religious School. Holiday cards were sent to Lone Soldiers from the Kehilah's families.

Andrea Malmud

VP/Chair, Israel Affairs Committee

Adath Shalom

Morris Plains, NJ

973-865-2077

amalmud@aol.com

Ayin LeTzion Committee

Congregation Beth Sholom, Teaneck, NJ

Israeli movies were screened, and we held a Tu b'Shevat seder including Israeli songs and an Israelography quiz. A weekly Hebrew word of the week was inserted in the Shabbat newsletter and the Kehillah held an Israeli song fest at the Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration.

Matt Halpern

Director of Administration

Congregation Beth Sholom

Teaneck, NJ

201-833-2620

matthew@cbsteaneck.org

Israeli Extravaganza: Israeli Scout Program

Jericho Jewish Center, Jericho, NY

The Israeli Scouts Caravan entertained the Kehillah with an evening of song, dance and stories of Israel.

Rita Gitter

Religious School Administrative Assistant

Jericho Jewish Center

Jericho, NY

516-938-2540

rita@jerichojc.com

Connecting with Israel Through Our Youngest Members

Temple Beth Shalom, Mahopac, NY

Rabbi Chaya Baker of Jerusalem joined the Kehillah for four days in November 2011, interacting with teenagers, the local JCC nursery program, the local J-Baby (tots) program, the Kehillah's Tot Shabbat service, the regular Friday evening service, the annual "New Members" Shabbat dinner, the Shabbat morning adult education class, the Shabbat School program and a Sisterhood program. At each opportunity, she inspired the congregation with the message she transmitted from Jerusalem. Throughout the weekend, Rabbi Baker discussed her work to form an exemplary synagogue in Israel and by extension, impact wider Israeli society through a deep love of Jewish tradition combined with a contemporary approach.

Rabbi Eytan Hammerman

Rabbi

Temple Beth Shalom

Mahopac, NY

845-628-6133

rabbi@tbsmahopac.org

Israel Technology Fair

Beth El Synagogue Center of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, NY

As part of the celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut, the Kehillah hosted a dozen top Israeli Universities and hi-tech companies in order to raise public awareness of Israel's outstanding achievements in science and technology. Technion Professor Boaz Golany highlighted Israel's contributions in agriculture, industrial engineering, medicine, biotechnology, communications and other areas. Presentations included Israeli breakthroughs in diabetes treatment, the electric car, homeland security surveillance, robotics, water conservation and much more. The film "Israel Inside: How a Small Nation Makes a Big Difference" was screened – a new uplifting documentary that explores core character strengths which enable Israelis to achieve success despite geographical and political challenges. Consul Shahar Azani addressed the gathering and local dignitaries presented proclamations commemorating Israel Technology Fair Day. The event drew 350 attendees of all ages throughout the day.

David Horowitz

Chair, Israel Affairs / Ma'alot Committee

Beth El Synagogue Center of New Rochelle

New Rochelle, NY

914-235-2700

dbhlspc@aol.com

IT'S MORE THAN MILK AND HONEY!
ISRAEL IS ELECTRIC CARS AND ROBOTICS, BIO-TECH AND NEW
WONDER DRUGS, SOFTWARE, CELL PHONE, WATER
CONSERVATION AND GREEN TECHNOLOGY

**WESTCHESTER'S FIRST
ISRAEL TECHNOLOGY FAIR**
Sunday April 22, 2012
11:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Beth El Synagogue Center
1324 North Avenue - New Rochelle, NY
www.bethelnr.org/techfair

OPEN TO ALL - ADMISSION IS FREE

Greetings from the Israeli Consulate

Keynote Presentation:
Technion: A Gateway to Israeli Technology

Additional Presentations Include:

- The Fully Electric Battery Powered Car of the Future . . . Is Here
- Revolutionize the Treatment of Diabetes – The Oral Insulin Pill
- Groundbreaking Israeli Sci-Tech Curriculum Comes to American Jewish Day Schools
- Innovations in Homeland Security from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
 - eCamp: The Ultimate Hi-Tech Summer Camp in Israel
- In the Tradition of Moses: INF Taps Rock and Out Comes Water – 6.6 Billion Gallons

Featuring New Film Screening at 3:00 pm
ISRAEL Inside: How a Small Nation Makes a Big Difference

2011 – 2012 Ma'alot Israel Awareness Grant Recipient

EXCITING EXHIBITS

VENDOR TABLES

LIGHT KOSHER LUNCH AVAILABLE

ISRAEL INSIDE

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Logos at the bottom: Jewish National Fund, UNICEF, Netesh, Local Organization, AMERICAN JEWISH COUNCIL, Technion, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Israeli Films and Filmmakers

Temple Beth-El of Bellmore, North Bellmore, NY

Three films made in Israel were presented on Saturday evenings over the course of three months - one film per month. After watching each film, the audience broke for refreshments and then sat comfortably and discussed the film. The concept was to do so together with the producers/directors/writers of those films, either in person or via Skype. The program was open to the general community and was very well received.

Nancy F. Kaplan

Chair-Israel Committee and Immediate Past President

Temple Beth-El of Bellmore

North Bellmore, NY

516-781-7272

dr.nkaplan@gmail.com



Israel and You

Shelter Rock Jewish Center, Roslyn, NY

The program was designed to promote awareness of daily life and ongoing issues in Israel. We highlighted similarities and differences between Israel and American students. Emphasis was placed on Israel Advocacy in terms of the current and future situation.

Cheryl Stern

Director of Education

Shelter Rock Jewish Center

Roslyn, NY

516 741 4305

cstern@srjc.org

The Synagogue Goes Ga-Ga over Israel: Introducing Ga-Ga to Tulsa

Congregation B'nai Emunah, Tulsa, OK

The Kehillah planned several programs which incorporated the new “gaga pit” with the Religious School and Midrasha curricula. The Men’s Club began constructing the “gaga pit,” which was completed after Midrasha graduation. (Midrasha is the community based Hebrew Middle and High School program). The students played Gaga, learning about Israel, while moving from station to station learning Israel Advocacy, the concept of a post high school study program in Israel, and how one can make Aliyah. Included were Israel- themed activities geared towards promoting Zionism and a link to Israel with Religious School students. Gaga has become a critical component of the overall curriculum which helps emphasize a strong connection to the State of Israel!

Eliyahu Krigel, MA

Director of Education

Congregation B'nai Emunah

Tulsa, OK

918-585-5437

elijahu@bnaiemunah.com

Israel Through Archaeology

Beit-Rayim, Thornhill, Ontario

The Kehillah sponsored a lecture on Israeli archaeology by a noted scholar which was very well received. We hope that it will become an annual event.

Ehud E. Avitzur

Israel Committee, Chair

Beit-Rayim

Thornhill, Ontario

416-8450055

eavitzur@yorku.ca

Young Emissaries: "Shinshinim"

B'nai Israel Beth Am Synagogue, Toronto, Ontario

The two young emissaries from Israel who joined the Kehillah this past year were involved in all aspects of congregational life. This included: working with the Shabbat and Festival Junior services on a weekly basis, presenting "News from Israel" during the main Shabbat service every other week, working regularly with the several youth groups, organizing Israel-oriented programming for young families, as well as for the member organizations within the Kehillah, Brotherhood, Sisterhood and Seniors Groups, teaching an Israel component weekly to the Judaic Studies pre-B'nai Mitzvah academic program and organizing Hebrew conversation classes for members.

Michael Rubin

Ritual Director

Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am Synagogue

Toronto, Ontario

416 633 5500 ext. 23

mrubin@bethdavid.com



Israel 64th Celebration

Congregation Or Shalom, Berwyn, PA

Ten days of varied activities were organized for all ages and all interests and were open to the public. Beginning with an Israeli Shabbat dinner which included stories from congregants about Israel, the program continued with a singer and story teller, Havdalah event, Yom Israel for the religious school, Israeli movie night, Israel museum activity, a lecture and family Israel - style Lag BaOmer event,

Na'ama Yarden

Education Director

Congregation Or Shalom

Berwyn, PA

610-644-9086

eddirector@orshalom.com



Journey to Israel

Beth Sholom Congregation, Elkins Park, PA

The highly successful Israel Program engaged over 400 congregants, transforming Beth Sholom Congregation into "Israel for a Day." The Friday evening multi-facteted pre-Shabbat program, included: Hebrew/English "Street Signs" directing people around the building, an Israeli Shuk that offering free food including Israeli- type food, A Gadna pre-Army Program, offering basic army training, a Krav Maga Demonstration and Lesson, a DJ playing Israeli music and Israeli Dancing, a Dead Sea Mud Facials from Ahava, A LIVE Camel – including photo opportunity, a Technology station with information from Kinetis on Israeli technology, planting seeds and information from JNF, early Zionist display, Shabbat-a-grams, an opportunity to leave a note in the Kotel, a Hebrew language room, El Al Display and much more. The busy "pre-Shabbat" time with communal shofar- blowing announced 18 minutes until Shabbat. At that time, all the "stations" closed and cleaned up and the congregation brought Shabbat in with a beautiful and festive candle lighting and Kabbalat Shabbat service. Following services, a Shabbat Cafe with zemirot, Israeli newspapers, and games was held. It was an incredible night for Beth Sholom.

Allison Sasson

Religious School Director

Beth Sholom Congregation

Elkins Park, PA

215-887-3625 ext 222

asasson@bethsholomcongregation.org

The Israeli Shuk, the Marketplace at Adath Israel

Adath Israel of the Main Line, Merion, PA

There were three programs:

1. An intergenerational Shabbat about Israel. The adults attended a Shabbat service and a discussion about Israel's history. The children learned about Israel through various activities, including making a map of Israel out of ice cream. Approximately seventy people attended.
2. An Israeli movie (Sippur Gadol) and a light meal attracted over one hundred people.
3. The third program, which was the most elaborate and work-intensive, included an Israeli Shuk, featuring Israeli products and Judaica. Israeli and Klezmer entertainment and an Israeli cooking demonstration were held in the center of the shuk. Attendees were then able to sample the food and left with recipes. Activities were directed to younger and older children, revolving around the map of Israel, an archeological dig, a Gadna style obstacle course, a jeopardy game based on Israel and much more. Volunteers built old fashioned stalls with cloth awnings of gold, red, blue and green. Outside the synagogue Israeli dancing took place as people sat around tables eating. The Nefesh B'Nefesh poster was prominently displayed at the entrance and all marketing included a mention of the grant and its sponsors. The event was advertised in Philadelphia and all of the suburbs bringing an with an attendance of over 600 people. It was an amazing event and people are still talking about it.

Rachel Fitoussi

Co-Chair of the Israel Affairs Committee

Adath Israel of the Main Line

Merion, PA

610-715-5621

rachel.fitoussi@gmail.com

Welcome Home to Israel!

Ohev Shalom of Bucks County, Richboro, PA

Welcome Home to Israel! was a congregational Israel fair featuring Israeli dancing, vendors of crafts and other goods from Israel, and Israeli foods. A slide show included images of Israel, accompanied by Jewish music. Religious School children carried homemade passports to the various craft and activity stations set up and received a sticker at each station. A representative from USCJ's Youth Department was on hand to talk about Israel programs such as Pilgrimage and Nativ, and JNF also promoted their programs. The Masorti Foundation further provided materials to congregants during the fair. A large number of volunteers from all areas of synagogue life worked together to plan and implement this program.

Rabbi Dan Aronson

Director, Congregational Learning

Ohev Shalom of Bucks County

Richboro, PA

(215) 322-9597

daronson@ohav.org

Israel Encounters – Ba-Aretz, Ba-Lev, Le-Olam

Congregation Ohev Shalom, Wallingford, PA

Capitalizing on the 2nd congregational trip to Israel to build the connection to Israel and the Masorti movement, a positive message about Israel was sent to the broader Jewish and non-Jewish communities. During the trip, the Kehillah and its social media friends enjoyed a vicarious sense of being in Israel, connecting with Moriah, the Masorti congregation in Haifa, and being involved in a Tzedakah campaign to assist the Carmel fire area. A Jewish/Israeli Film Festival was developed.

Karen R. Stesis

Chair, Jewish Community/Israel Relations Committee

Congregation Ohev Shalom

Wallingford, PA

610-874-0182

stesiskr@hotmail.com

B'nai Anousim Tour and Conference in Israel

Cingregation B.nai Zion, El Paso, TX

The program included bringing members of the B'nei Anousim (crypto-Jews) from the Southwest Israel Organization for a tour and meetings in Israel. Included were educational programs run at the Fuchsberg Center in Jerusalem. Tisha B'av Services were held at the Hess Promenade in Jerusalem together with a Masorti Congregation and a Motzei Tisha B'av Concert at the Agron Street Synagogue.

Stephen Leon

Rabbi

Cingregation B.nai Zion

El Paso, TX

915-526-3693

rabbisal@aol.com

Or Ami Celebrates Israel

Congregation Or Ami, Houston, TX

The first program included a Hebrew Zumba class set to contemporary Israeli Music, followed by an Israeli Falafel lunch. After lunch, a discussion was held on religious pluralism in Israel. Young members of the Kehillah then decorated sugar cookies with blue and white colored frosting. The second event was an amazing Shabbat Dinner where the Area Director of AIPAC spoke about current Israel defense issues. A Schwarma dinner was prepared by the Kitchen Committee, including Israeli desserts. A Kehillah Mission trip to Israel with twenty-eight people completed the programs.

Rabbi Gideon Estes

Rabbi

Congregation Or Ami

Houston, TX

713-334-4300

rabbi.estes@gmail.com

AIPAC or J Street or Both? Which is best for Israel?

Congregation Kol Ami, Salt Lake City, UT

A panel of four congregants discussed their attitudes toward AIPAC or J Street. A short debate between the panelists was held and was followed by questions and a vigorous discussion.

Liz Paige

First Vice President

Congregation Kol Ami

Salt Lake City, UT

801-209-3191

lizpaige@conkolami.org

A Virtual Trip to Israel: You're Almost There!

Rodef Sholom Temple, Hampton, VA

A list of Israeli cities was developed for a virtual visit, featuring modern and Biblical Israel, an Ulpan, the beach in Eilat, Jacob's tent, a dance club, a kibbutz, shopping in Tel Aviv, an Israeli buffet and more. Students with completed passports entered a drawing for Israeli prizes, and a grand prize of \$500 was awarded towards a trip to Israel or a Jewish summer camp.

Tess Goldblatt

Director of Congregational Learning

Rodef Sholom Temple

Hampton, VA

757-826-5894

office@rodefsholomtemple.org

Nefesh B’Nefesh

Since 2002, Nefesh B’Nefesh has been dedicated to revitalizing Aliyah from North America and the UK by removing or minimizing the financial, professional, logistical and social obstacles of Aliyah. Working in cooperation with the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency for Israel, Nefesh B’Nefesh has brought over 32,000 Olim to Israel.

For more information please contact us at:

www.nbn.org.il • 1-866-4-ALIYAH • ari@nbn.org.il

MA'ALOT

TAKING STEPS TOWARDS RAISING ISRAEL AWARENESS



Ma'alot Grants 2012 - 2013



Program in Review

Nefesh
B'Nefesh
Aliyah: Live the dream



Israel Committee
of
The United Synagogue
of Conservative Judaism



הסוכנות היהודית
JEWISH AGENCY
FOR ISRAEL
ישראל



המשרד
לקליטת
העלייה

Dear Friends,

Our program entitled: “Ma’alot: Taking Steps Towards Raising Israel Awareness,” provides grants to our USCJ *Kehillot* for a variety of Israel activities through the special partnership between the USCJ and Nefesh B’Nefesh. In the first year of the program, 2009–2010, ten pilot *Kehillot* were awarded grants. In 2010–2011, we were proud to announce that 26 *Kehillot* received grants. In 2011–2012, 49 recipients were selected. This year, after deciding to award more substantial grants – there will be fourteen \$2,500 grants and two “Connectivity Grants” in the amount of \$7,000 each.

Within the context of USCJ’s Strategic Plan, Ma’alot grants have enabled these *Kehillot* to plan, organize and run unprecedented Israel programming and activities. Our 2013–2014 grant recipients are continuing in this tradition of excellence.

Please find below brief descriptions of the highlights of the 2012–2013 programs. However, since there is a wealth of detail available, we encourage you to be in touch with the program organizers to find out more details. In this way, you will further enrich your *Kehillot’s* awareness of, and involvement with, Israel. We would appreciate a copy of your correspondence.

Please feel free to contact us at any time for guidance and assistance.

B’Vracha,

Rachel Russo
Chair
Israel Committee
USCJ

Rabbi Paul Freedman
Director
Israel Strategic Partnerships
Israel Committee USCJ
freedman@uscj.org

Morey Schapira
Israel Committee Coordinator
USCJ
schapira@uscj.org

Ari Schuchman
Director
NA Operations
Nefesh B’Nefesh
ari@nbn.org.il



Howard Sniderman, *International Vice President, USCJ*; Debbie Sniderman; Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, *Executive Director, Nefesh B’Nefesh*; Rabbi Steve Wernick, *President & CEO, USCJ* & Rabbi Paul Freedman, *Director of the Israel Committee, USCJ* visiting the Nefesh B’Nefesh office in Jerusalem.

A Vision With Heart

Congregation Kol Emeth, Palo Alto, CA

Congregation Kol Emeth focused on connecting members with the sparsely populated region of the Central Arava Region in Israel through a series of educational programs and tzedekah projects.

Kol Emeth raised over \$50,000 for a new Central Arava Medical Center in Sapir, Israel. This was done in partnership with the Jewish National Fund. Educational programming included a series of articles in the monthly KE newsletter and two guest speakers from Israel. The guest speakers were a member of the Central Arava Regional Council and the Israel Consul General of the Pacific Northwest Region.

The Kol Emeth Religious School students engaged in a collaborative art project with students in the Central Arava. Pictures and narratives about the Kol Emeth and Arava students' lives were shared. These served as the inspiration for the student art creations.

The second component of the Religious School Arava Education program was the very successful "hands on" family experiential learning day, Yom Yisrael on Sunday, April 28. The highlights included a "mock" Arava Medical Center; live desert animals; Ted talks about solar, drip irrigation, geology; and making smoothies on a blender bike.

This summer's congregational Israel trip participants visited Sapir in the Central Arava. They met with the Mayor of the Central Arava Region and visited the site for the new Medical Center. They learned about the innovative agricultural research and training programs for workers from third world countries.

Barbara Schapira

Chair, Israel Action Committee

Congregation Kol Emeth

Palo Alto, CA

408-737-1099

bjschapira@gmail.com



Hebrew Immersion Program

Peninsula Sinai Congregation, Foster City, CA

Realizing that no Israel team who actively engaged the community in study around the Holy Land existed, this year, with the help of the Ma'alot grant from USCJ and Nefesh B'Nefesh, PSC launched a campaign to engage our congregants and broader community into the beauty of Israel through language and culture. We created a Hebrew immersion class taught by a native Israeli who lives locally. With her help, we were able to reach out to local Israelis who moved to the Bay Area and help their children continue learning and speaking Hebrew, and through Hebrew language instruction, we connected an otherwise secular community to the wonders of Jewish and Israeli history, holidays, culture, and more. Similarly, we created a two-part series for adults to help American born Jews connect with their heritage through Hebrew, both reading and speaking the language of our ancestors. These programs have successfully changed the way that we as a community think about and connect to Israel. Discussions are already underway to not only continue these classes in the coming year, but for the synagogue to take its first ever congregational trip to Israel. In the year to come, not only will the Hebrew immersion program for the kids of Israelis continue along with our two part course in reading and conversational Hebrew, but we will begin an 18 part course in the history of Zionism, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and much more. Thank you to USCJ and Nefesh B'Nefesh for enabling us to not only put Israel on the map and on the radar of our community, but for helping our community appreciate the blessing of having Israel as a part of our lives, past, present, and going forward in the future.

Rabbi Corey Helfand

Peninsula Sinai Congregation

499 Boothbay Avenue
Foster City, California 94404
650-349-2816 Ext. 101
Fax: 650-349-2845
rabbi@peninsulasinai.org
www.peninsulasinai.org



Krembo - A new Immersion program for Hebrew speaking children beginning fall of 2012!

For more information please contact: Sharon Shapiro, Program Director
hebrew@peninsulasinai.org or call 650-863-2886

The Goal: To acquire and retain skills for mastering modern Hebrew and strengthen the connection to Israeli culture all through a fun and supportive group environment.

These weekly afternoon classes will incorporate a variety of materials and methods in order to make learning interesting and fun while focusing on:

- Expanding fluency and vocabulary
- Reading and writing skills
- Israeli holidays, culture and much more
- Promoting individual expression in Hebrew through a supportive group dynamic

Save your spot! Email hebrew@peninsulasinai.org
Or call Sharon Shapiro at : 650-863-2886.



Israel Ambassador Program

Shomrei Torah Synagogue, West Hills, CA

The Israel Ambassador Program created a new generation of advocates for Israel in the Shomrei Torah Synagogue community. This program was open to those who have traveled on an organized peer trip to Israel in their high school years.

The year began with an Israel Shabbaton, followed by monthly classes with distinguished guests from AIPAC, Ari Sacher, from Rafael Missile Defense System, Congressman Brad Sherman, representatives of the Israeli Consulate, college leaders on Campus, StandWithUs, the Israeli American Council, and other Israel organizations.

These students traveled to the AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, DC, to take part in the lobbying aspect of the US-Israel relationship. Upon their return to Shomrei Torah Synagogue, the ambassadors set up internships for the upcoming year, learning advocacy and educational skills within a US-Israel related organization.

Our alumni now study at distinguished universities such as Brandeis, Manhattanville College, George Washington University, UCLA, and Cal-State Northridge, majoring in International relations and Judaic studies. Other students will be attending the NATIV year in Israel.

Most importantly, this program has invigorated our congregation to become more active in the pro-Israel conversation. Our numbers have increased to over 50 participants traveling to Washington, DC for the AIPAC Policy conference. Many of these new participants are family members of our Israel Ambassadors.

Rabbi Erez Sherman and David Helfand

Directors of the Israel
Ambassador Program

Shomrei Torah Synagogue

West Hills, CA
818-346-0811
esherman@stsonline.org
dhelfand@stsonline.org



Israel Ambassador Program Delegation to the AIPAC Conference

My Family Story Project

North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, Highland Park, IL

Our school participated in the My Family Story project sponsored by Beit Hatfutsot. In this yearlong genealogical program students in the sixth grade researched the stories of their families and created a three-dimensional artistic expression. The three projects that were the most visually attractive capturing the family narrative, and that were well researched were sent to Beit Hatfutsot. One of the projects, the Chupah, the universal Jewish symbol for life and continuity, won the international competition in the North America, Europe and Australia category. The student who won the competition in our school flew with his family to Israel to attend the My Family Story ceremony at Beit Hatfutsot on June 13, 2013.

Alicia Gejman

Director of Formal Education

North Suburban Synagogue Beth El

Highland Park, IL

www.nssbethel.org

An Israeli Happening with Follow-up

Temple Beth Torah, Holliston, MA

The activities made possible through the Ma'alot grant included a happening celebrating Israel with 100 participants in attendance. A series of interactive stations was set up, enabling people to sample Israeli food, learn Israel Folk Dancing, participate in a simulated Israeli "boot camp" earning an Israeli pin, visiting a "Shook" (Israeli market) making bead necklaces, Kipot and creatively designing a Biblical character. A representative of the Myra and Robert Kraft Passport to Israel Program shared information on their savings plan for Israel Youth Trips with our USY Pilgrimage and Nativ cited and brochures were distributed.

Recognizing that our Israel-orientated activities should continue, as a result of the momentum generated by the Ma'alot grant, the Israel Action Committee decided to infuse Israel into the Religious school, launching a pen pal program with Masorti schools in Israel, aiming at a specific pen pal program for each specific class. We have purchased "Play Money" in the form of Shekels for classroom use and also posters that will be prominently displayed.

The Ma'alot grant also made possible setting up a plasma TV screen in the Temple lobby on which our TBT USY group and videographer will put together a montage of student interviews from past years' trips to Israel. Additional activities scheduled include three sessions of the iEngage Hartman Institute program, a presentation by the Past President of the American Technion on "The Evolution of the Israeli Economy and its direct impact on the State of Massachusetts" and also a family trip to Israel in the spring of 2013.

Temple Beth Torah

Holliston, Ma

Israel Action Committee

Patricia Yorke pyorke105@verizon.net

Barbara Kutner manitoba11@verizon.net

A Year-Long Celebration of Israel@65

Beth Israel Congregation, Owings Mills, MD

Our celebration of Israel's 65th birthday included the following events:

1. An adult learning program using the Hartmann Israel i- Engage curriculum.
2. A special Israeli style Shabbat.
3. Screening of the movie HolyLand Hardball with guest speaker
4. Dr. Erica Brown lecture "Israel and the case for Jewish Peoplehood"
5. Dr Robert Freedman (2 lectures) on Israel today
6. Dr Barry Schwartz, our Yom HaAzmaut Scholar in Residence and finally
7. Our Israel@65 congregation wide celebration

Rabbi Jay R Goldstein

Beth Israel Congregation

3706 Crondall lane
Owings Mills MD 21117

Shaping the Future of Israel: The Mission and Vision of Masorti Judaism

Beth El Synagogue, St. Louis Park, MN

Our weekend scholar-in-resident with Masorti Rabbi, Yoav Ende from Kibbutz Hannaton inspired and educated our local Jewish community. We staged formal talks and informal discussions with young adults, empty nesters and our senior population. In each case, they came away more connected to Israel and with a deepened understanding of the importance of Masorti Judaism for Israel and for their own lives. Far more than abstract, academic lectures, these passionate presentations about the future of Israeli society, touched a nerve. Congregants from different synagogues as well as Federation activists came away understanding that they can help shape Israel by making Aliyah as well as by their active support from Minnesota.

Alexander Davis

Rabbi

Beth El Synagogue

St Louis Park, MN
alexander@bethelsynagogue.org
952 873-7300

The Israel Connection

Marlboro Jewish Center, Marlboro, NJ

This six-session weekly course was based upon a curriculum developed by Melitz in Jerusalem. Our youth are going to college with minimal if any, knowledge of Israel. Yet they will be faced with anti-Semitic and anti-Israel protests on campuses across the country. In many cases their parents are also not conversant about Israel, although they have an affiliation with a Kehillah. The 1.5 to 2 hour sessions explored Jewish Identity; History of Zionism and discussion of anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israel comments and writings; Palestine 101 – a map based discussion of Palestine from the Ottoman Empire, British Control, the multiple wars, present day borders and Israeli government responsibilities within the Palestinian Territories; Constructing and Deconstructing narratives – what is the author saying, what is the agenda and do you agree; Skype session on current affairs, with a representative in Jerusalem; A final session where the participants used the skills they had learned. An average of 25-30 people from the community attended each session. Rabbi Pont also used portions of the material with the Hebrew High School students. In total, there were over 260 “student hours” of training conducted.

Jules D. Cohn

Chairperson Israel Affairs Committee

Marlboro Jewish Center

103 School Road West

Marlboro, NJ 07746

732-536-2300

juelsdcohn@aol.com

Long Island Israeli Jazz and Film Festival

South Huntington Jewish Center, Melville, NY

Our goal was to present a positive view of modern Israel to the wider community, through a celebration of modern Israeli culture. The Long Island Israeli Jazz and Film Festival attracted over two hundred people to our synagogue. The event featured a concert by an Israeli jazz guitarist and his ensemble, and screenings of award-winning film shorts from established Israeli directors and recent Israeli film school graduates; accompanied by an assortment of Israeli foods. Eye-catching blue, black and white bookmarks, postcards and posters of the event were distributed to numerous synagogues and community centers in the area, raising awareness of Israel in a positive context. The printed program described the films and provided biographies of the directors and musicians, and created a platform for ads from individuals and businesses to help underwrite the festival. The contributions of the many hard-working, dedicated volunteers and the assistance from the Ma'alot grant combined to ensure that the festival was a great success.

Yvonne Cort

Trustee, Israel Affairs

South Huntington Jewish Center

2600 New York Avenue

Melville, NY

(631) 421-3224

mail@shjc.org

Café '65: Dix Hills Jewish Center Israel Gala

Dix Hills Jewish Center, Dix Hills, NY

Anchored by a breathtaking presentation by Paul Kay, the Dix Hills Jewish Center Israel Independence Day Celebrations were a marvelous event attended by more than two hundred fifty. Mr. Kay spoke of his daring exploits of being part of a volunteer crew (ma'apilim) from around the Jewish world on an Exodus-like ship, bringing refugees from the Holocaust gathered in the port of Marseilles to Israel - a remarkable adventure, and how the British intercepted his vessel. Following this presentation, along with Yom Ha'Atzmaut Prayers and the sounding of the shofar, all in attendance entered our Cafe 65. Israel foods and wines were served, along with Israel dancing led by a talented Israeli dance instructor. Participants from Birthright Israel spoke to attendees about the joy of travel to Israel and religious school students had decorated our banquet hall for Cafe 65 with Israeli themes. Brochures from the Israel Government Tourist Agency were in abundance and all celebrated Israel's 65th birthday with joy and celebration!

Howard R Buechler
Rabbi

Ed Ward
Executive Director

Dix Hills Jewish Center
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www.Dhjc.org
Rabbibuechler@gmail.com
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Let's Talk About Israel: Informed Engagement

Temple Beth Sholom, Roslyn Heights, NY

The Need: In our ever-changing world, Jewish students are going to college and are being confronted with anti-Israel (and anti-semitic) rhetoric and propaganda. How do we equip our students to be able to parse through the massive amounts of information with which they will be dealing? How do we impart a basis of knowledge that can help them determine fact from fabrication? How do we tell them what resources exist for support?

The Response: Temple Beth Sholom through its Machon Beth Sholom High School and Youth Community partnered with the Queens College Jewish Studies Department and Professor Mark Rosenblum, its Chairperson for a 5 evening intensive seminar about Israel's situation, what students may hear on college campuses and how to refute distorted statements and where to look for support. Of the 5 sessions, two were with parents.

To see a syllabus for the course and publicity materials please feel free to contact the synagogue. The program was open to the entire community to all 10-12 graders from other synagogues, our local Solomon Schechter high school and Jewish students in the community.

The Feedback: Feedback has been excellent. Students felt this was a really important class but that our conversation has just begun. Parents are interested in a class just for adults.

Gila Hadani Ward

Director of Lifelong Learning

Temple Beth Sholom

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ghadaniward@tbsroslyn.org
www.tbsroslyn.org

Israel Awareness Week

Beth El Synagogue, Durham, NC

Our Israel Awareness Week events took place from April 10-April 14, 2013. On Wednesday, April 10 we saw the film, "The Other Son" and held a panel discussion afterwards; On Thursday, April 11, our teens heard a talk by Israeli Consul General Opher Aviran; On Friday April 12th we held a Community Shabbat Dinner featuring biblically inspired food and a talk by Asaf Elias, an Ethiopian Jew living in our community; On Saturday evening April 13 we held a gala Israeli wine tasting event and concert of Israeli music by renowned musician Avram Pengas which raised close to \$3,000 for the Ethiopian Jewish Community of Hadera. We also enjoyed interesting talks by distinguished Israeli scholars Mishael Caspi on religious pluralism in Israel (Shabbat afternoon, April 13) and by Elie Rekhess on Israel's Arab minority (Sunday morning, April 14).

Sandy Kessler
Program Chair

Beth El Synagogue
Durham, North Carolina 27701
919 682-1238
sanford.kessler@gmail.com



Living with Loss

Beit-Rayim Synagogue and School, Thornhill, ON

A few days after Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, Beit Rayim invited and hosted an Israeli mother and her son, who have lost a son and brother during the last hours in the Second Lebanon War. They joined us for Erev Shabbat, Shabbat services and social gatherings. On the following Sunday we had a lecture event to which the congregation and the community at large were invited.

In the lecture they told us their story, shared with us their thoughts and feelings about their ultimate sacrifice. We also heard about life after the terrible loss, and about the support they have been receiving from people and organizations in Israel.

For many this event was extremely engaging, combining tragedy with the power of life in Israel.

This event brought our congregation and community closer to a pivotal aspect in the Israeli experience. After listening to their story, conveyed in the most compelling way, life in Israel seems much more tangible than ever before.

Ehud E. Avitzur

Past Chair Israel Committee

Congregation Beit-Rayim

Thornhill/Richmond Hill

Ontario, Canada

905 889 0276

Israeli Young Emissaries Program

Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am Synagogue, Toronto, ON

The goal of Beth David's Israeli Young Emissaries (*Shinshinim*) Program was to create a living bridge between our *kehillah* and Israel by hosting two "gap year" Israeli teenagers in our community. In their 10 months with us, Noa and Shani succeeded in bringing Israel to us, through their participation in our Shabbat and festival services, where they brought regular "News from Israel" reports, programs to mark important dates such as Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, working year-round with our Judaic studies program, our Kadima and United Synagogue Youth groups, our Brotherhood, Sisterhood and Seniors groups, teaching an Israel component to our Judaic Studies pre-B'nai Mitzvah program and organizing Hebrew conversation classes for shul members. They put tremendous thought and effort into everything they did at Beth David this year.

With their warm and engaging personalities, Noa and Shani had a meaningful impact on our congregation, both at the individual level and as a community, as well as on their host families. Through their countless creative programs, Noa and Shani deepened our understanding of what it's like to be born into Israel's past and history, and what it's like to grow up in Israel with all of its wonders and challenges. They succeeded in furthering our understanding of the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. In turn, we hope that we communicated to them the interest, love and support for Israel that exists both at Beth David and the Toronto community.

Andy Pascoe

Vice President

Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am Synagogue

Toronto, ON

(416) 633-5500

andy.pascoe@hotmail.com



Israel Connectivity Lecture Series

Yehudah Katz comes to Lower Merion, PA

Lower Merion, PA

From Wednesday, April 17 – Sunday, April 21 we hosted Israeli performer, song-writer and Jewish Educator Yehudah Katz in our community. His visit to the Jewish Community of Lower Merion, PA was made possible through the generosity of a grant received from Nefesh B’Nefesh in conjunction with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. The visit was co-sponsored by the Conservative congregations of Lower Merion, PA:

Temple Beth Hillel – Beth El, Wynnewood, Pa

Har Zion Temple, Penn Valley, PA

Temple Adath Israel, Merion Station, PA

Beth Am Israel, Penn Valley, PA

Rabbi Neil Cooper

Rabbis Sam Kieffer and Michael Knopf

Rabbi Eric Yanoff

Rabbi David Ackerman

In addition to our local congregational rabbis, we received indispensable help from our USCJ Kehilla Relationship Manager, Rabbi Eliseo Rozenwasser.

While in our area, Yehudah Katz was able to perform and teach in each synagogue and in our local Day High School, the Jack Barrack Hebrew Academy. His visit culminated with a Community-Wide Concert at Har Zion Temple in honor of Yom Ha-Atzma’ut. Each of the events which preceded the large community concert was focused on the theme of Jewish Identity, Jewish Unity and Ahavat Yisrael (love of Israel).

1. Thursday, April 18, 4:00 pm, Beth Am Israel

Yehudah met with the students in the religious school. His workshop there began with a music video which features Yehudah Katz and stimulated a discussion about Jewish Identity and *Ahavat Yisrael*. The students were extremely receptive to his presentation. Following the video and discussion, he was able to lead the students in singing.

2. Friday, April 19 – Shabbat, April 20, Temple Beth Hillel – Beth El

Yehuda Katz spent Shabbat at Temple Beth Hillel – Beth El.

- a. On Friday evening, Yehudah preceded service by leading the congregation in niggunim, accompanying himself on his guitar. Following the niggunim, the congregation was prepared to welcome Shabbat. Yehudah led the congregation in a spirited and soulful Kabbalat Shabbat service.
- b. We reconvened with Yehudah on Shabbat afternoon. After *Se’udah Shlishit*, Yehudah taught an adult group again about *Ahavat Yisrael*. The program concluded with *Ma’ariv/Havdalah*. Following *Havdalah*, Yehudah performed in a coffee-house setting. This performance was attended by 200+.

3. **Sunday, April 21**

- a. Yehudah began at 9:30 am with another successful program led for High School students at Har Zion Temple.
- b. This was followed by a program for the high school students at Adath Israel (11:15 – 12:15). After that program, Yehudah went back to Har Zion to prepare with his band for the afternoon concert.
- c. Publicity had been handled in a few ways:
 - i. The "Jewish Exponent": Rabbi Cooper had taken out quarter-page ads in the weekly Federation paper. Unfortunately, they had recorded our agreement incorrectly. Rather than running the ad two consecutive weeks, they forgot to insert the ad for the second week. That mistake hurt our numbers.
 - ii. Flyers: I had someone pass out flyers in the Northeast sections of the City, in order to attract the local Israeli community to the concert.
 - iii. Pulpits: Each of our rabbis has been announcing the concert from their pulpits for some time.
 - iv. Community Calendars: The concert was advertised on local community bulletins, Jewish and non-Jewish.
- d. The Community-Wide Concert took began at 5:00 pm and lasted until 6:40 pm.
- e. The turnout for the concert was fair. Approximately 250 people came. For those who did not, they missed a wonderful concert and time. The concert, held at Har Zion, was the culmination of our celebration of Yom HaAtzmaut. Yehudah performed for about 1.5 hours. His presentation was upbeat, rhythmic and easy to follow.

4. **Postsripts:**

- a. The program was a great success. In the short time he was here, Yehudah was able to extend his reach and touch students from different synagogues, day school students and adults during Kabbalat Shabbat, *Seudah Shlishit* and the Coffee House.
- b. Through these programs, we were able to bring to our community positive, attractive and upbeat lessons regarding spirituality, Jewish Unity and support for Israel.
- c. Attendance was good in some cases (Kabbalat Shabbat and the Coffee House) and not so good (Barrack and the Community Concert).
- d. The program served as a means by which our close Conservative colleagues could combine efforts on behalf of a wonderful program which none of us could have done individually.
- e. We have learned that the lessons we were trying to impart were extremely important. Through the financial support of our congregations, as well as contributions which other individuals were motivated to make, we were able to cover our costs and return to each synagogue funds which each congregation will use for Israel Teen Travel Scholarship.

- f. It is our hope that through this and other programs like it, we will be able to bring both healing to our community while reinforcing a positive and enthusiastic message about Jewish Unity and support of Israel.



Yehudah Katz in Concert



Nefesh B'Nefesh Oleh (Summer 2013) and Rabbi of Har Zion Temple, Rabbi Sam Kieffer introducing Yehudah Katz

The High Price of Jewish Statehood, Why Israel is Worth the Cost

Temple Shalom, Greenwich, CT

On Thursday, March 14, 2013, Dr. Daniel Gordis came to Temple Shalom for a lecture on “The High Price of Jewish Statehood: Why Israel is Worth the Cost”. Dr. Gordis is the Senior Vice President of the Shalem Center and is a distinguished author and lecturer. His visit to Temple Shalom was made possible through the generosity of a grant received from Nefesh B’Nefesh in conjunction with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

In addition to the expert team at Nefesh B’Nefesh, we worked closely with our USCJ Kehilla Relationship Manager, Nadine Kohavi and Rabbi Paul Freedman also of USCJ. The three partners took lead in planning the event and distributing tasks among each organization. Nefesh B’Nefesh created the marketing materials; Temple Shalom got community partners and USCJ reached out to other conservative synagogues in our region. Many conference calls were held between the three organizations for detailed planning of the event.

We used Dr. Gordis’ visit as an opportunity to reach out to other Jewish communal agencies and bring them on as community partners. These included: Solomon Schechter of Westchester; Bi-Cultural Day School; Westchester Jewish Council; UJA Federation of Greenwich, AIPAC and Congregation Agudath Shalom. Each of the community partners were given marketing materials to distribute and encouraged to invite their own members / constituents to the program. Temple Shalom bought advertising space in some of the local newspapers and also received article coverage in the Greenwich Jewish News.


The event began with a meet and greet at 6:30pm on March 14th. At this time, Dr. Gordis met with sponsors and patrons and invited guests. There were opportunities to take photos with him as well as some small / individual discussions.

At 7:30pm, the general program began. Dr. Gordis spoke for about an hour with time for questions & answers. After the lecture, we held a book signing. We sold out of the books almost immediately. In total approximately 250 people from the greater Greenwich, CT community attended the event. We did not charge for the event, although we did have a suggested donation of \$5.00 per person.


Reflection:

The overall program was successful. Dr. Gordis was able to address the provocative topic of Why Israel is Worth the Cost starting dialogue in a community that is mixed in its support for Israel. Attendance to the event was good and reached not only the Temple Shalom congregation but the greater Greenwich community as well. We had people coming from other towns such as Stamford, CT and White Plains, NY who do not usually attend programs at Temple Shalom, thus giving the congregation additional exposure.

Sample of poster / flyer that was created for the event:



Temple Sholom,
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
and Nefesh B'Nefesh
invite you to an
Israel Connectivity Lecture:
**The High Price of Jewish Statehood:
Why Israel is Worth the Cost**



featuring award winning
author and lecturer
Dr. Daniel Gordis
Senior Vice President
of the Shalem Center

Join us for this provocative and interactive evening!



Thursday, March 14, 2013 • 7:30-9:00pm

Temple Sholom, 300 East Putnam Avenue, Greenwich, CT

Dr. Gordis' books will be available for sale
and to be signed at the conclusion of the program.

For more information and to RSVP, please contact Alice Schoen:
alice.schoen@templesholom.com or (203)542-7165.

Suggested donation \$5.00

COMMUNITY PARTNERS: Westchester Jewish Council • UJA Federation Greenwich • Congregation Agudath Sholom • AIPAC

Lori Baden
Senior Director
Membership & Programming

Temple Sholom
300 East Putnam Avenue
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Representatives from Temple Shalom, USCJ and Nefesh B' Nefesh with Daniel Gordis



Dr. Gordis speaking on “The High Price of Jewish Statehood: Why Israel is Worth the Cost” and discussing his book “The Promise of Israel”



Dr. Gordis signing books after the lecture

USCJ Israel Committee

VISION:

The vision of the USCJ Israel Committee is to empower Jews in North America through the community of kehillot to fully engage with Israel. The vision is to facilitate and strengthen the connections between Conservative kehillot, the individuals therein and Israel such that Israel is integral to their identities and actions as Conservative Jews.

MISSION:

The Israel Committee's mission will include:

- To provide the kehillot and the Districts and Departments of USCJ with information, materials and programming concerning Israel.
- To offer user-friendly services to kehillot by facilitating contacts with existing agencies and resources.
- To assist, facilitate, and encourage our constituents to consider Aliyah and provide olim from our kehillot with a Conservative/Masorti contact in Israel.
- To develop support for other Israel-oriented agencies both internal and external to the Conservative movement.
- To strengthen the connection between Conservative kehillot in North America and the individuals therein and Masorti kehillot in Israel and the individuals therein.

For more information please contact us at:

freedman@uscj.org • www.uscj.org

Nefesh B'Nefesh

Since 2002, Nefesh B'Nefesh has been dedicated to revitalizing Aliyah from North America and the UK by removing or minimizing the financial, professional, logistical and social obstacles of Aliyah. Working in cooperation with the Israeli government, the Jewish Agency for Israel, Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael and the Jewish National Fund, Nefesh B'Nefesh has brought over 35,000 Olim to Israel.

For more information please contact us at:

www.nbn.org.il • 1-866-4-ALIYAH • ari@nbn.org.il

MA'ALOT

TAKING STEPS TOWARDS RAISING ISRAEL AWARENESS



Ma'alot Grants 2013 - 2014



Program in Review

Nefesh Nefesh
Aliyah: Live the dream



Israel Committee
of
The United Synagogue
of Conservative Judaism



הסוכנות היהודית
JEWISH AGENCY
FOR ISRAEL



Ministry of
Aliyah and
Immigrant
Absorption

Dear Friends,

Our program entitled: “Ma’alot: Taking Steps Towards Raising Israel Awareness,” provides grants to our USCJ *Kehillot* for a variety of Israel activities through the special partnership between the USCJ and Nefesh B’Nefesh. In the first year of the program, 2009–2010, ten pilot *Kehillot* were awarded grants. In 2010-2011, we were proud to announce that 26 *Kehillot* received grants. In 2011-2012, 49 recipients were selected. In 2012-2013 it was decided to award more substantial grants – Fourteen \$2500 grants and two “Connectivity Grants” in the amount of \$7000 each. This year, once again we awarded sixteen more substantial \$2500 grants plus.

Within the context of USCJ’s Strategic Plan, Ma’alot grants have enabled these *Kehillot* to plan, organize and run unprecedented Israel programming and activities. Our 2014-2015 grant recipients are continuing in this tradition of excellence.

Please find below brief descriptions featuring the highlights of these 2013-2014 programs. However, since there is a wealth of detail available, we encourage you to be in touch with the program organizers to tap into these details. In this way, you will further enrich your *Kehillot*’s awareness of, and involvement with, Israel. We would appreciate a copy of your correspondence.

Please feel free to contact us at any time for guidance and assistance.

B’Vracha,

Rachel Russo
Chair
Israel Committee
USCJ

Rabbi Paul Freedman
Director
Israel Strategic Partnerships
Israel Committee USCJ
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Morey Schapira
Kehilla Relationship Manager
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Ari Schuchman
Director, NA Operations
Nefesh B’Nefesh
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Howard Sniderman, *International Vice President, USCJ*; Debbie Sniderman; Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, *Executive Director, Nefesh B’Nefesh*; Rabbi Steve Wernick, *President & CEO, USCJ* & Rabbi Paul Freedman, *Director, Israel Strategic Partnerships, USCJ* visiting the Nefesh B’Nefesh office in Jerusalem.

Creative Connections- A Vision with HEART- Kol Emeth and the Central Arava

Congregation Kol Emeth, Palo Alto, CA

The Ma'alot 2013-2014 project had several components over the course of the year.

Kol Emeth artists and artists living in the Arava region of Israel collaborated in creating an art exhibit comprised of creative works of poetry, music, watercolor, wire sculpture, mixed media, oil painting, pastels, quilting, origami mobile, bronze sculpture, photography and ceramics. Each of our respective communities displayed the works via digital prints and the original art.

The project started in the fall of 2013 with text study at both Cong Kol Emeth and in Sapir, Israel. The Rabbis shared ideas about text and participants discussed ideas as a basis for the exhibit theme, "Journey". We "met" via skype to then share our thoughts and ideas about the subject. This was an interactive meeting, which allowed the artists to introduce themselves to each other as well as share their ideas and thoughts about the subject matter.

The collaborative "Journey" exhibit was displayed at the *Matnas*, community center, in Sapir from mid February to April 2014. This included the opening of the exhibit during Limmud Arava with Natan Sharansky as the guest speaker. It was great having him view our works from our Palo Alto community in Israel! saart exhibit was then displayed at our synagogue as part of a "Hands on Sunday". This is an interactive Religious School family education program. This included skyping with the artists in Israel and then having a variety of art workshops for both students and adults. Students prepared questions for the artists so they could learn more about their lives living in the Arava. Students also help prepare some of the Israeli lunch that was enjoyed by all participants.

The exhibit was then on display at the Oshman Family Jewish Community Center, Palo Alto from the end of May to Aug 25, 2014. This provided the opportunity for thousands of people in the "heart of Silicon Valley" to view the exhibit.

A self-published book was created of all the works and biographies of the artists. This project has been a wonderful way to strengthen the connection between our two communities and engage each other in a creative forum.

Barbara Schapira
bjschapira@gmail.com



HeChalutzim: The Next Step

Emtza USY

HeChaluzim: The Next Step is a re-envisioned form of the USY HeChaluztim program. It is a new initiative that focused on continued Israel engagement for teens returning from a summer Israel experience through involvement with EMTZA Region USY. Our region recently sent over 30 teens on USY Israel experiences this summer alone not to mention those teens who are participating in community or camp trips. HeChaluzim is an International program and our region is hoping to re-brand the concept so it better meets the needs of our constituents. The yearlong initiative consisted of three in-person programs at our three major regional conventions, three online webinars and culminated in a day-long Israel seminar in Spring 2014. In addition, the Region carried out an exciting conference call with a Lone Soldier, within the framework of the USCJ Israel Committee Israel Ambassadors Program

Lisa Krule

krule@uscj.org

Rabbi Paul Freedman

freedman@uscj.org



Lev V'Nefesh Israel Journey and Post-Israel Advocacy Education

Solomon Schechter School of Westchester

Our seniors spent two months in Israel in February and March of 2014, and then studied Israel Advocacy in April and May in preparation for going off to college., after returning to school for April and May they did extensive Israel Advocacy training. The students interacted with the Kehillah and the general community. They served as effective “ambassadors for Israel and will continue to play a role on their specific college campuses in the year ahead, sharing their experiences with the Kehillah when back home.

Rabbi Harry Pell

hpell@schechterwestchester.org



Through fun, immersion experiences like running in the Jerusalem marathon, our students became connected with the land and the people of Israel.

Let's Talk Israel

Temple Beth-El of Bellmore, North Bellmore, NY

"Let's Talk Israel" is a five-session education and Israel advocacy program based on the *Step Up For Israel* initiative from JerusalemOnlineU.com. Using the initiative's films and moderated discussions, and culminating with an "Israeli cafe" to share experiences with those who traveled to Israel with our rabbi in December (2013), this program will empower participants to become effective advocates for Israel while effectively communicating about Israel to family, friends, and the larger community. With the onslaught of the anti-Israel BDS (Boycott, Divest, and Sanction) movement, unbalanced and inaccurate media coverage, and the increase in the questioning of Israel's very right to exist, this is a program that is very much needed in our community NOW.

Nancy F. Kaplan, PhD.

Dr.nkaplan@gmail.com

Chair, TBE Israel Affairs



Don Jacobson, representative of Masorti movement, spoke at "Taste of Israel" event

The School-Shul Cyber Friends

Congregation Agudas Achim, San Antonio, TX

The grant underwrote the installation of Wi-Fi in our synagogue to further develop and strengthen the relationship our religious school, the Inda Posner Religious School of Congregation Agudas Achim (IPRS), forged with the Shazar School in Akko, Israel. With Wi-Fi, our students were able to Skype with the Israeli students of our new sister-school and continue the dual lessons and projects initiated earlier this year through The Jewish Agency for Israel Partnership2GETHER twinning program, San Antonio Jewish Federation and IPRS. After Wi-Fi installation, we will host a community-wide program on a Sunday morning wherein our Education Director and the two teachers who recently visited the Shazar School in Akko related their experiences in Israel and outlined the future plans between the two schools. We'll live Skype for the first time with the Shazar School students. The children performed songs together and shared letters, and arts and crafts exchanged over the school year. The families of both the Israeli and American students also interact. This event will not only be informative, but an important celebration of the cyber-friends and families connecting for the first time. The social aspect

reinforced our commitment to a future relationship of understanding, learning and fun. Of course, the event w ended with a nosh of favorite children's Israeli foods!

Karin Katims

k.katims@agudas-achim.org



Live from Israel, It's B'nai Amoona!

Congregation B'nai Amoona, St. Louis, MD

A few of our members who are traveling to Israel this summer will have mini video cameras. 7-10 times throughout their trip, they will record short videos and post them to the B'nai Amoona Youtube account. The videos can be any creative format they want, an on-the-spot reporting from the shuk before Shabbat, a re-enactment from the top of Masada, a sports report from a Dead Sea "swim meet", or any other exciting moments they want to capture. We will brainstorm a list of possible videos with them before they leave. When a posts a new video, we will publicize it heavily to the whole kehillah. After the students return, we will continue to use the videos as resources. Since the videos will accumulate in the BA Youtube account, we will have a whole library of videos that educators can use to show a live look at the places they teach about in religious school, youth groups, adult education, and any other outlet. Upon their return, we plan to have a welcome home event where everyone who traveled to Israel that year can share their stories, videos, and memories. We will have Israeli food, music, and invite the entire congregation.

Rabbi Carmie Rose

ravroseba@aol.com

Young Adults Israel and Judaism Experience

Congregation Agudas Israel, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

On behalf of the Young Jewish Adults Group in Saskatoon and Congregation Agudas Israel, we would like to sincerely thank Nefesh B’Nefesh and the USCJ Israel Committee and all those involved in the Ma'alot Grant Program for the generous grant!

This grant enabled an opportunity that could have never happened otherwise. From June 6-8th, 2014, 32 members of the Young Jewish Adults Group (YAD) and their children were privileged to spend an amazing Shabbat together outside of the city.

The program for the retreat had a variety of activities, which included some bonding fun, and plenty of active outdoor fun: hiking, zip lining, and soccer. We enjoyed a lovely Kabbalat Shabbat, Shabbat morning service, and Havdalah followed by an Israeli sing along. We also heard a very informative talk led by our Rabbi, who is also a member of the young adult group.

Thank you very much for the support. This event was a very important step for building the next generation of leadership in our community. We would love very much your support in the coming years, and are interested in applying for the grant again in order for this wonderful community building program to continue.

Itai Bar and Laurie Goldstein

The Israeli Shlichim

Areivim.sask@gmail.com



Building Virtual Community with Israel

Congregation Shaarie Torah, Portland, OR

Thank you for the opportunity to create relationship between American and Israeli children under the *Ma'alot* grant program, provided by the Israel Committee of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism jointly with *Nefesh B'Nefesh*.

We at Congregation Shaarie Torah ("CST") are passionate in our feelings toward Israel. Every *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, we hold a great festival, celebrating Israel's modern rebirth. Israel is frequently discussed at CST events, such as speakers' programs for *Shabbat kiddush*.

CST has created virtual community with *Hashachar* School, under the canopy of the Tali organization . To accomplish this, we purchased web-conferencing equipment to link members of our congregation to their counterparts in Israel. *B'nai mitzvah* students from CST met virtually with their counterparts. Former residents of the *kehilah* who have made *aliyah* to Israel communicated with current members of our congregation. A program for all CST teens highlighting Israeli history, politics, culture and religion was implemented, culminating in an interactive trivia competition during the *Yom Ha'atzmaut* celebration on May 7, 2014. Each group met virtually with their Israeli counterparts at least three times, and covered religious, secular and political topics, including *B'nai mitzvah*, contrasting American and Israeli cultures, co-learning (e.g., Hebrew vs. English), sharing tokens of culture (such as little gift bags), developing electronic pen pals, and creating resources for congregants.

Google Forms application used to discuss questions and kids responded to kids creating a more personal connection. CST and *Hashachar* school invited each other to respond to these questions:

1. Share about a subject in school that you absolutely love.
2. Share about a place in Israel that you love, even if you have never been there.
3. What are some values that are clearly Jewish that you have adopted or learned from your family and/or surroundings? How do you apply these in your world?
4. How does a Jewish holiday feel in Israel/ in America? How do you sense or experience this feeling?

In addition, CST students created appreciation art for counterparts in Israel which Education Director Dorice Horenstein delivered during a recent trip to Israel.

- Israel Independence Day Celebration:
On May 2nd, 2014, we held festivities at Congregation Shaarie Torah, where the congregants and the youth participated in various modes of learning about Israel. We held an art session for kids, ran an Israeli Casino (shesh-besh, Israeli Monopoly, and other card games), delighted in Israeli dancing, enjoyed a movie, featured on Jerusalem On-Line University, and attended a lecture, delivered by the Community Relations Committee of the Federation of Portland. Our Israeli counterpart created a slide show with questions about Israel in the format "Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader" game. which our youth played.

Below is an excerpt from our professional partners in *Hashachar* school:

"In the 2013 year, I was glad to participate in various projects with Jewish communities out of Israel, and with Israeli communities in Israel. We, in the Hashachar School, as part of the Tali organization, were happy to join the Overseas Friends project, started mid-year.

From the moment I spoke with Dorice, I realized the importance she attaches to the project and the commitment and dedication she exhibits to its activities and content. We talked several times, using the Anymeeting software Dorice introduced us to. In Dorice, I discovered an amazing teacher, representing the Jewish community, in a warm and loving manner.

I was glad to introduce our students to the American children. Talk amongst us led to finding similarities and differences between our cultures. Activities focused on finding the children's connection to their Judaism, both in the United States and Israel. and of the bar, bat mitzvah of our students.

Undoubtedly, our connection was at its peak during the video sessions. Students could tell the story of their lives. Students could hear and be heard. At our first meeting, the students shared an object with significance to them. We talked and played together. During the second meeting, we focused on our Jewish experiences in Israel and the U.S. Despite technical difficulties in connection, the atmosphere in the computer room was wonderful, the children were fascinated with each other. Ours talked about meeting days later. We ended each of the two sessions by singing the Israeli anthem, The Hope. It was a powerful experience, and fun!

I hope that this activity is the doorway to more successful projects with the community of Portland. I hope that the relationship will lead to the immigration to Israel by those Jews who so desire. I hope that it leads to recognition that the purpose of a better life for the Jewish people in a Jewish state of has to be Israel."

– Reuven Adir Greenberg, Computer Activities Coordinator in Hashachar school, Israel

Reflections by Dorice Horenstein:

"When I first started to conceive of the idea of a virtual community, I had several goals: To connect Jewish American teens with Israeli teens, to create within each child an understanding of the concept of identity, in particular Jewish identity, and to build a relationship within each child and the Jewish homeland, Israel.

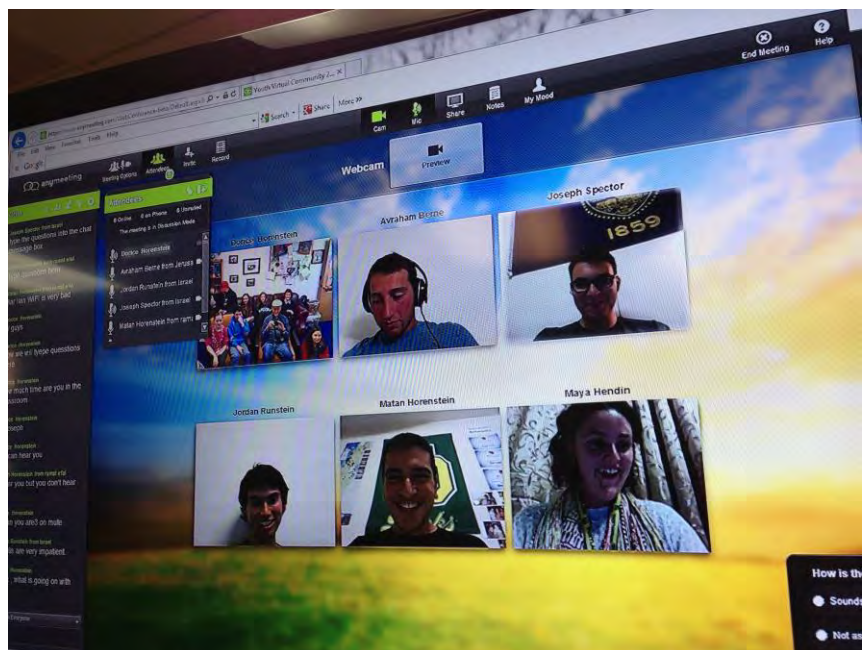
Students agreed to take part in this enrichment program, one that has the potential to create far-reaching home discussions regarding what it means to be a Jewish person in America, the challenges, as well as the rewards, and how we see ourselves growing and developing our identity, notwithstanding the influences of our friends, community and nationality. One of our teachers implemented an activity that explores how do we see ourselves presently, and what can be of influence on the adults we will develop into. It was a fascinating discussion."

- Dorice Horenstein, Education Director, Congregation Shaarie Torah.

It was a worthy program for our youth to engage in and we hope to receive more opportunities to do so in the future.

Dorice Horenstein

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Israel Inside Out

Congregation Sons of Israel, Nyack, NY

Using participants from the May 2013 Mission, programs will be created to enable the community to learn more about Israel. Speakers will be invited throughout the year. The award-winning program: “Schmooze in the News about Israel” will meet on weekly basis. Already scheduled is a special program about Israel around Tu B’ Shevat with Russell Robinson, CEO of JNF discussing what JNF is doing beyond just planting trees in Israel plus a special Tu B’Shevat Seder with an Israel focus discussing the seasons in Israel and why a holiday like Tu B’Shevat is so important. The second program will take place at the end of Yom HaZikaron leading into Yom Ha’Atzmaut.

Rabbi Ariel Russo

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Israel Ambassador Program

Shomrei Torah Synagogue, West Hills, CA

The Israel Ambassador Program(IAP) entered its third year. This program is meant for those high school students who have traveled to Israel on an organized trip, be it Ramah, USY, LA Hebrew High Partnership Program, or study abroad program through their Jewish day school. IAP is modeled after Birthright Next, where there is follow up to the Israel experience. The program started with 5 students, grew to 7 last year, and this year we have 15 eligible teens. During the year in this program, the students study with Rabbi Sherman on a monthly basis, exploring the US-Israel relationship. Each session includes a theme, a text, and a speaker. We meet the Israeli Consulate in LA, local Congressmen, and representatives of Israel organizations such as AIPAC, StandWithUs, JNF, Jerusalem Online, the Israeli American Council, and USY. A highlight of this past year was a special presentation by David Keren, head of Israel programs for USY. The program begins with a Shabbaton in August. The monthly sessions lead up to a trip to Washington, DC for the AIPAC Policy Conference in March. Upon our return from Washington, DC, the students are required to create an internship with a US-Israel organization. In their internship, they are required to connect that organization to our synagogue through education programming. Over the last two years, we have successfully placed our Ambassadors as interns with AIPAC, StandWithUs, Jerusalem Online, Congressman Brad Sherman, JNF, the Shomrei Torah Synagogue Synagogue Israel Committee, Camp Ramah Ojai, and USY. Most importantly, these students have greatly impacted Israel advocacy and education in our synagogue. Adults have been inspired to become active in the Israel conversation based on the efforts of these extraordinary teen leaders.

Ilan Schwartz

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Ahavat Zion- The Heart and the Spirit

Temple Beth-El, Poughkeepsie, NY

The phrase 'Ahavat Zion' represents the emotional and spiritual core of Zionism and of The Hebrew as a Civilization of Faith. This has become embodied in the revival of modern Israel. For us at Temple Beth-El education, Ahavat Zion is a bold educational experience focusing on the cultural journey of the spirit of Zionism from antiquity to modern time Israel. This program was designed to provide leadership training to our USY/Kadima and as well as our Gesher high school students by immersing in a journey of cultural view of the Zionist soul from antiquity to modern Israel, and thereby establishing for them a new Israel related activities with long term effects for the whole community. This intensive program consisted of a series of interactive creative multi-media workshops during the month of Tishrei 5774 (September 2013) in order to empower our youth with a new meaning of Jewish character, strengthening their heart and mind in the face of adversity and inspiring participation in Israel advocacy in colleges and the larger community. A specific goal of this program was to effectively engage youth's emotion and motion toward Zionism and Israel and motivate them to carry on this spirit throughout the year within the community. To this end, the program culminated with a live performance by the youth at our annually celebration of Sukkat Shalom. This performance will marked the beginning of a new community program lead by our post Bar/Bat Mitzvah students called Shabbatron (Shabbat Teatron) -- presenting Hebrew/Israel cultural activities at our monthly community Shabbat Mishpachah. The program included testimonies by youth who have traveled to Israel, a Tzofim leader, a former Native participant, as well as wealth of audio-visual, printed and online materials. In addition, we were fortunate to also invite two internationally renowned Israeli musicians and performers of Zionist art songs: Bavat Marom (opera singer) and Ady Cohen (composer) who visited the region for the High Holidays season. Through the songs, music, poetry and culture of the Zionist vision our students discovered the spiritual power of the 'Love of Zion' and the poetic beauty of its multi-faceted cultural articulations. With this we defined for our youths a leadership role as activists of the Zionist culture, The Hebrew Civilization and the presence of Israel in the world, and provided them with creative tools, know-how materials, and a work plan for a long period of time.

Rabbi Miriam Hyman

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A Mini-Israel Vacation “Camp” at Temple Beth Shalom

Temple Beth Shalom, Mahopac, NY

Temple Beth Shalom offered several — intensive days of camp-like Israel-related programming during a 2013-2014 school vacation period (li “Presidents’ Week” in February). With varied offerings dependent upon the age of the participants, we engaged the entire congregation youth community (tots through teens). The camp will feature visiting educators from the Ein Yael Living Museum in Jerusalem. See <http://einyael.co.il/> to learn more (note: website is in Hebrew). During the three weekday days of our mini-camp, youth participants travel “back in time” to the land first settled by the Canaanites in the 12th century BC. Participants learned ancient arts and craft techniques, participating in workshops ranging from pottery, weaving and basketry to papermaking, fresco, wine making and pita baking. We will brought two educators to our congregation from the Ein Yael Museum (located just next to the Biblical Zoo) in Jerusalem. A future congregational trip to Israel will, of course, feature a visit to the actual Ein Yael, which houses the beautiful remains of a Roman villa in an archaeological complex dating back to the 2nd century. The camp concluded with a Shabbat celebration with our visiting Ein Yael educators for youth, their families and the wider synagogue community. We took the opportunity of having these educators with us to have at least one program/event with our “empty-nester” population. The educators were hosted by synagogue members.

Rabbi Sarah Friedson-King

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Ein Yael Living Museum Educators bring Ancient Israel Crafts to Life at Temple Beth Shalom, Mahopac NY

Herzl at Herzl: Heschel Society Shabbaton

Beth El Synagogue, St. Louis Park, MN

Last year, Beth El Synagogue in St. Louis Park, Minnesota began a groundbreaking initiative. Beth El gathered a cohort of exemplary teens and united them in the mission to create a chapter group of the national United Synagogue Youth (USY) Honor Society – named after Abraham Joshua Heschel. In doing so, Beth El became the first synagogue to create a chapter level of the Abraham Joshua Heschel Honor Society (AJHHS) and, in doing so, altered the impact and significance of the group. For Beth El teens participating in AJHHS, their commitment to *Torah, avodah, and g'milut hasadim* expanded far beyond a once or twice a year commitment and, instead, became part of their day-to-day lives.

The current AJHHS chapter recognizes twenty-four students (six from each high school grade) based on their commitment to and passion for Jewish life and learning. Students participate in monthly study sessions, volunteer projects with local organizations, and additional educational opportunities. In the past year, AJHHS students were privileged to attend speaker events with Thomas Friedman, Ehud Barak, and Hillary Clinton. In addition to hearing first-hand from the great and influential voices of today, the AJHHS program also helps students learn how to use their own voices – especially when it comes to Israel education and advocacy. Indeed, Israel has served as a primary study topic for the group, with the program's monthly study sessions being guided by *A Case for Israel* and *A Case for Peace* by Alan Dershowitz.

This year, members of the Beth El Heschel group had the opportunity to bring their learning to a new level through the generous funding of a Ma'alot Israel and Education Advocacy grant – a joint project of the USCJ Israel Committee and Nefesh B'Nefesh. In January, the group spent a weekend at Herzl Camp in Webster, Wisconsin. The study topic for the weekend was 'Herzl at Herzl,' focusing on the scholarship and influence of Theodor Herzl. To put the weekend's educational topics in context, Friday night began with a study session about the Dreyfus Affair and the emergence of Herzl as a leading Zionist figure. The teens thought about how they would respond to a circumstance like the Dreyfus Affair, and the group speculated on the security of Jews worldwide today. Additionally, the group learned about different strands of Zionism and the significance of modern-day Israel's physical location in *eretz yisrael*.

Beyond historical understanding and context, the *Shabbaton* also provided opportunities for AJHHS students to evaluate their role as Diaspora Jews and explore their personal stories about Israel – either first-hand or through the experiences of others. To explore these topics, the group engaged in a text study looking at the question, "is it a *mitzvah* to make *aliyah*." This question forced the students to critically consider their responsibility, as American Jews, to support and strengthen the state of Israel. Following the discussion, several teens commented that the conversation encouraged them to place a greater significance on connecting with Israel and Jewish life in general. Later in the weekend, the teens also shared and discussed personal stories related to Israel, encouraging the group to recognize the significance of spending time in the Jewish state as well as to develop the ability to speak about those experiences.

Although the weekend's schedule required a rigorous level of study from the teens, there was still time for play. Over the course of the weekend, the group made hummus from scratch, participated in bonding and leadership building games, and enjoyed several conversations in front of a roaring fireplace. One incredible observation from the weekend was that many of these fireside conversations centered on Israel, *aliyah*, and the role of Jews in America. This fact demonstrates the high level of engagement the teens felt for the material as well as the impact of that learning in the future. Overall, the weekend gave Beth El's AJHHS students an opportunity they could not find elsewhere – an intimate weekend of learning, study, and Israel education designed specifically for teens. As the weekend came to a close, students expressed gratitude towards the Ma'alot Israel and Education Advocacy grant that made the weekend possible and were already earnestly requesting that the weekend be repeated again next year. The experience will surely not be forgotten by anyone who attended.

Rabbi Avi Olitzky

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Israel- What a Trip!

Congregation Kol Shofar, Tiburon, CA

Israel – What a Trip! was a unique experiential program which exposed teens, young adults and their families to the wonders of traveling to Israel whether on an organized trip or as a family. A series of interactive workshops highlighted the less exposed aspects of Israeli life and travel such as eco-tourism, food, social action, and the arts, and also examined modern Israeli culture. A digital photo booth allowed students and families to “see” themselves in Israel with a backdrop of Israeli landscapes, creating the ultimate “selfie” in Israel. Yom Ha’atzmaut posters from every year since the creation of the State, as well as other Israeli artwork was provided by San Francisco based Jewish LearningWorks. This, along with other interactive exhibits and experiences, created an environment for participatory learning. Israeli cuisine, music, technology and arts education generated energetic discussion and movement through a series of experiential activities. The evening ended with a panel of high school, college and adult educators who spoke about the impact that travel in Israel had on their personal approaches to learning and Jewish life and answered questions from the students and their parents. Participants left with a complete list of all programs and organizations that lead trips to Israel, whether for a few weeks, a summer trip, a semester or a full gap year. In all, it was a positive experience for teens and parents, who were able to explore the possibilities of travel to Israel in a new way, and consider new opportunities for learning and engagement.

Jonathan Emanuel
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קול שופר KOL SHOFAR

Join Us For...
Israel—What A Trip!

Wednesday
February 12, 2014
6:15pm-8:45pm
For 7th-12th Graders
and Parents

Have you ever thought about going to Israel? Come learn about the value of participating in a group trip to Israel. Representatives from trip providers and past participants, will tell you their stories. Hear for yourself the value of these trips!

Participate In:

- Family Learning
- Israeli Food Themed Dinner
- Music
- Art Projects

For questions or to RSVP contact
Jordan Hopstone at
jhopstone@kolshofar.org or
415.388.1818, ext. 101

נפש Nefesh ב'נפש B'Nefesh

THE JEWISH LEARNINGWORKS FOUNDATION

Sabra- Hebrew High Enrichment

Congregation Beth Am, San Diego, CA

Congregation Beth Am runs the only Hebrew High Program for Conservative Jewish teens in San Diego. In the absence of a community Hebrew High school, and the only other alternatives linked to either Chabad or Reform synagogues, we have pursued our path for engaging our post-B'nai Mitzvah students in an atmosphere of continued Jewish learning and social growth. Now in its fourth year we can confidently say we have maintained a population of over 80 students per year and we grow by one or two students each year! Our program is aptly called Sabra as we believe that a necessary aspect of a teen's Jewish education is linked to one's connection to Israel. We therefore created a Hebrew High program that emphasizes Israel and Zionism as we believe they are some of the most important contributors to a positive Jewish identity. Sabra offers a track for students to learn Hebrew for foreign language credit. We are accredited at all of the local high school districts. We devote two years to Zionism and Israel Advocacy. We also bring in engaging speakers on a quarterly basis from partnering Zionist programs such as Stand With Us, JNF, AIPAC, and the Avi Schaefer fund. Whenever there is a crisis in Israel we change our program to inform our students of the current matzav/situation and then allow them to ask questions and discuss their own reactions to what is going on. Most significantly we encourage on a regular basis for all of our students to go to Israel on USY programs. This is encouraged by our faculty, four of whom were former attendees on pilgrimage and/or Nativ.. In addition to informal stories shared by our faculty about their experiences, we also formally invite our Youth Director to speak about pilgrimage and other USY programs during our break times.

This year we added, thanks to the Ma'alot Grant

1. Expanding educational opportunities to Israel to new unaffiliated young teens and their families.
2. Enriching the current educational experience of our student population.
3. Strengthen the connection of our students to USY Israel experiences, with the hopes of linking them to potential aliyah when they get older.

We would like to bring in a speaker from Israel who could speak about living in Israel to our student population and local teens. We brought representatives from Noam, and engaged speakers from the JNF program.. We advertised this to the larger San Diego Jewish community as part of our Sabra program. We invited parents to attend the event. We believe by providing an engaging, informative speaker who speaks about an aspect of Israel whether it be gender roles, or the environment, we were able to invoke a significant response in San Diego. We utilized this event to encourage others to engage in Jewish/Zionist education in our Sabra program.

Rabbi Matthew Earle

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USCJ Israel Committee

VISION:

The vision of the USCJ Israel Committee is to empower Jews in North America through the community of kehillot to fully engage with Israel. The vision is to facilitate and strengthen the connections between Conservative kehillot, the individuals therein and Israel such that Israel is integral to their identities and actions as Conservative Jews.

MISSION:

The Israel Committee's mission will include:

- To provide the kehillot and the Districts and Departments of USCJ with information, materials and programming concerning Israel.
- To offer user-friendly services to kehillot by facilitating contacts with existing agencies and resources.
- To assist, facilitate, and encourage our constituents to consider Aliyah and provide olim from our kehillot with a Conservative/Masorti contact in Israel.
- To develop support for other Israel-oriented agencies both internal and external to the Conservative movement.
- To strengthen the connection between Conservative kehillot in North America and the individuals therein and Masorti kehillot in Israel and the individuals therein.

For more information please contact us at:

freedman@uscj.org • www.uscj.org

Nefesh B'Nefesh

Since 2002, Nefesh B'Nefesh has been dedicated to revitalizing Aliyah from North America and the UK by removing or minimizing the financial, professional, logistical and social obstacles of Aliyah. Working in cooperation with the Israeli government, the Jewish Agency for Israel, Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael and the Jewish National Fund, Nefesh B'Nefesh has brought over 42,000 Olim to Israel.

For more information please contact us at:

www.nbn.org.il • 1-866-4-ALIYAH • ari@nbn.org.il

MA'ALOT

TAKING STEPS TOWARDS RAISING ISRAEL AWARENESS



Ma'alot Grants 2014 - 2015



Program in Review

Nefesh Nefesh
נפש נפש
Aliyah: Live the dream



Israel Committee
of
The United Synagogue
of Conservative Judaism



Your Voice in Israel



הסוכנות היהודית
JEWISH AGENCY
FOR ISRAEL



Ministry of
Aliyah and
Immigrant
Absorption

Dear Friends,

Our program entitled: “Ma’alot: Taking Steps Towards Raising Israel Awareness,” provides grants to our USCJ *Kehillot* for a variety of Israel activities through the special partnership between the USCJ and Nefesh B’Nefesh. In the first year of the program, 2009–2010, ten pilot *Kehillot* were awarded grants. In 2010-2011, we were proud to announce that 26 *Kehillot* received grants. In 2011-2012, 49 recipients were selected. In 2012-2013 it was decided to award more substantial grants – Fourteen \$2500 grants and two “Connectivity Grants” in the amount of \$7000 each. In 2013-2014 once again we awarded sixteen more substantial \$2500 grants plus. In 2014-2015, we awarded grants reaching a total of eighteen USCJ *Kehillot*.

Within the context of USCJ’s Strategic Plan, Ma’alot grants have enabled these *Kehillot* to plan, organize and run unprecedented Israel programming and activities.

Please find below brief descriptions featuring the highlights of these 2014-2105 programs. However, since there is a wealth of detail available, we encourage you to be in touch with the program organizers to tap into these details. In this way, you will further enrich your *Kehillot’s* awareness of, and involvement with, Israel. We would appreciate a copy of your correspondence.

Please feel free to contact us at any time for guidance and assistance.

B’Vracha,

Rabbi Paul Freedman

Director, Israel Strategic Partnerships

Israel Committee USCJ

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Ari Schuchman

Director, North American Operations

Nefesh B’Nefesh

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Howard Sniderman, *Secretary, USCJ*; Debbie Sniderman; Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, *Executive Director, Nefesh B’Nefesh*; Rabbi Steve Wernick, *President & CEO, USCJ* & Rabbi Paul Freedman, *Director, Israel Strategic Partnerships, USCJ* visiting the Nefesh B’Nefesh office in Jerusalem.

Strengthening Our Connections With Israel

Congregation Beth Ami, Santa Rosa, CA

On behalf of Congregation Beth Ami and its Israel Programming Committee, we thank USCJ and Nefesh B’Nefesh for the wonderful opportunities to promote Israel that the Ma’alot grant has afforded us. Without its support, we would have been unable to bring the high quality Israel programming to our synagogue and all of Sonoma County, California as we have done and will continue to do this grant year.

Our synagogue is known as the most Zionist in the county, but its budget, and hence our budget, has been very tight. In prior years, we had to rely solely on the donations of our committee members and that limited our effectiveness.

- Our Ma’alot Grant programming year began in July during the Gaza war. On July 23, our committee organized and put on (with very short notice) for all of Sonoma County, California an “Emergency Solidarity with Israel” rally. Creating the program in a short two weeks involved arranging for speakers from the Consulate of Israel and our various congregations, creating a program, and advertising it. To attend, the Consul required that we hire guards and the grant provided the needed funding to hire these guards. The rally was a huge success with between 150-200 Zionists attending. You can see the poster we used at http://IsraelUpdate.Info/index_IsraelEmergencyMeeting.htm
- On October 11th, we brought Jonathan Carey, founder and CEO of BlueStar, an Israel advocacy group, to our synagogue for a Shabbat learning experiences. He led an interactive workshop on methods what work (and what doesn’t work) when combatting anti-Israel bias. This is crucially important for us because we are bombarded by anti-Israel bias in the media and even from among our own people. In a small community such as this, there are few opportunities to learn the truth, and to learn how to be persuasive and effective when confronted by bias.

BlueStar does many Zionist activities include Write for Israel, but is perhaps best known for creating pro-Israel posters that are used around the world. BlueStar is based in San Francisco. You can see the poster we created for Jonathan’s visit at http://israelupdate.info/index_Carey.htm

- We’re still basking in our most recent success. We put on the Sonoma County Israel Opportunity Fair on we held on December 7th. Twenty exhibitors presented opportunities for adults, high school, and college students to travel, study, and volunteer in Israel. Over 150 people attended and we were stunned by the remarkable turnout. This is a small community and it’s hard to get people to show up for events. Your grant made it possible for us to offer falafel and other Israeli food, prepared by our volunteers. We were also able to hire an accordionist to play lively Israeli music. You can see from the photos we sent you that Ma’alot and Nefesh B’Nefesh are prominently featured in this and all our activities. Find a poster we created for this event at http://IsraelUpdate.info/index_for_Israel_Fair.htm In addition to the Deputy Consul of Israel, Dr. Mike Harris of StandwithUs spoke to an enthusiastic crowd that, we were gratified to note, included a number of our community’s teens.

- Next we used the funds to put on a weekend of talks and workshops led by Gary Kenzer, North American CEO of Honest Reporting. Honest Reporting defends Israel by revealing and reporting against biased and misinformed media, and teaching individuals how to hold media accountable. Gary flew from Chicago to San Francisco and then drove up to Santa Rosa to give several talks and workshops over the weekend. We actively encouraged our youth to attend the talks and workshops on being an effective advocate for Israel, both in writing and in discussion. Such advocacy education is crucial as they approach college age since many campuses are breeding grounds for anti-Israel organizations and at some nearby universities there is a frenzy of bigotry against Israel. Through your grant, we are immunizing our kids against these attacks and sending them to college as effective advocates. You can see our advertising poster of his visit at <http://israelupdate.info/indexHonestReporting.htm> .
- In April, we put on Yom haZikaron and Yom haAtzmaut events. See http://israelupdate.info/Yom_haZikaron2015_index.htm

All of our events are advertised county-wide and draw from the whole county. They have attracted people who had to drive over 90 minutes to attend. Your Grant funds are having a great impact on the Zionists of Sonoma County and beyond.

Eli Cohen

elicohen@informingscience.org



Deputy Consul General of Israel to San Francisco Eyal Naor (Center) with Mr. and Mrs. Eli Cohen.



Sunday@Camp: The Great Israel Time Machine

The Jewish Learning Network (Temple Beth Am, Shomrei Torah Synagogue, Adat Ari El)
Los Angeles, CA

In April 2015, the JLCN staged an experiential learning experience, “Great Israel Time Machine” that simulated student’s exploration of the land, history and culture of Israel. One hundred 3rd – 7th grade students from the Jewish Learning Community Network traveled through different eras of Israel’s existence to investigate what makes Israel unique. Students participated from three Los Angeles area Conservative synagogues, Adat Ari El in North Hollywood, Temple Beth Am in Los Angeles and Shomrei Torah Synagogue in West Hills. These synagogues have partnered in the Jewish Learning Community Network to create community based experiential learning experiences to immerse kids in Jewish learning. One of the highlights of this collaboration has been “Sundays@Camp,” an opportunity for students from all three schools to meet regularly to create a larger Jewish peer community as well as benefit from experiential learning opportunities outside of their classrooms. Four Sundays@Camp occurred at the Brandies Bardin campus of the American Jewish University in Simi Valley, California throughout the year, including this special Israel themed experience.

Students visited Israel’s Biblical period, where they interacted with the heroes of the bible through archery, examined relics on an archeological dig and recreated ancient mosaics. While visiting the “Eras of Aliyah”, students danced with the halutzim, worked out with Israeli soldiers, and learned about the immigrants who gathered from the four corners of the earth to make Israel their home. In contemporary Israel, students attended a writer’s workshop with Israeli author, Yehudah Amichai, created works of art with Israeli artist, Agam, and made their own Hebrew bumper stickers in the style of Israeli music artists Hadag Nachash. Finally, students journeyed into Israel of the future, learning about and producing their own Israeli innovations.

As students traveled through time, they recorded their experiences in their own travel logs. The travel logs assisted students in gathering and recording meaningful information and gave students direction throughout the day. Our teachers acted as time travelling guides, leading their students through each time period and assisting them in completing two out of three activities in each period.

Thanks to the Ma’alot/Nefesh B’Nefesh grant, the JLCN was able to provide bus transportation, a delicious meal of Israeli food and special programming including a Krav Maga instructor, archery specialist and art specialist on our unique Israel day. Through the support of this grant, we will be able to make this program more accessible for participating students and enrich the program through unique elements, including food and specialty instructors. This added value brought to life Israel for our students by maximizing their sensory experience and making Israel compelling and engaging for our students.

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Johannah Sohn
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Biblical Archery (L) & Recreating Ancient Mosaics (R)

A Mini-Israel Vacation “Camp” at the Jewish Community Center of Harrison

Jewish Community Center of Harrison, Harrison, NY

The Jewish Community Center of Harrison offered a Shabbaton and several intensive days of camp-like Israel-related programming during a 2014-2015 school vacation period (“Presidents’ Week” in February). With varied offerings dependent upon the age of the participants for the camp, we engaged the entire congregation youth community (tots through teens). The camp featured visiting educators from the Ein Yael Living Museum in Jerusalem. See <http://einyael.co.il/> to learn more (note: website is in Hebrew). During the two weekday days of our mini-camp, youth participants travel “back in time” to the land first settled by the Canaanites in the 12th century BC. Participants learned ancient arts and craft techniques, participating in workshops ranging from pottery, weaving and basketry to papermaking, fresco, wine making and pita baking. We brought two educators to our congregation from the Ein Yael Museum (located just next to the Biblical Zoo) in Jerusalem. A future congregational trip to Israel will, of course, feature a visit to the actual Ein Yael, which houses the beautiful remains of a Roman villa in an archaeological complex dating back to the 2nd century. The camp began with a Shabbat celebration with our visiting Ein Yael educators for youth, their families and the wider synagogue community. The educators were hosted by synagogue members. In total, some fifty campers and ten CITs (teenage counselors) participated in the camp; some 75+ individuals interacted with the counselors over the course of the Shabbat as well.

Rabbi Eytan Hammerman
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The Keshet Program: Building People to People Connections with Israel

Temple Israel of Natick, Natick, MA

With the help of the Ma'alot grant, Temple Israel launched a one-year program aimed at sowing deep relationships between members of our Kehilla and the people of Israel, with an emphasis on Israel's Jewish diversity. This program is built on several driving principles: building personal relationships with people in Israel, promoting diversity and inclusiveness, and strong commitment to the State of Israel. Guided by these core principles, the Keshet program offered several events throughout the year, which reached a wide, cross-generational audience. A centerpiece of our Keshet program is the partnership with the *Kehila Masortit be Ra'anana Amitai (Kehilat Amitai)*. This conservative Kehilla embodies Israel's diversity, as it was formed when two Masorti congregations in Ra'anana, one founded by *Olim* from English-speaking countries, and one founded by *Olim* from Latin America, merged.

Activities:

Rosh Hashanah L'Chaim with Masorti Community in Ra'anana

A few days before Rosh Hashanah, Temple Israel's leadership met with the leadership of the Masorti congregation in Ra'anana, Israel via Skype. This was a wonderful opportunity for the two teams to meet each other, brainstorm ideas for joint programming, and to join in a l'chaim for a new year, a new partnership, and new friendship.

Teen Encounter

A group of teens from our own USY chapter met via Skype with a group of madrichim from the Ra'anana Masorti community via skype. The teens introduced each other, shared experiences in each country, and talked about plans to continue communication via whatsapp and other technologies. This communication is ongoing.

Hanukkah in Israel

Temple Israel of Natick held its annual Hanukkah party with a new theme—Hanukkah in Israel! The celebration began with a Hannukah-themed "Tour of Israel," including making Maccabee shields in Modiin, painting dreidels in Haifa, filling in sufganiyot with jelly in Tel-Aviv in building a Beit Mikdash model from Legos in Jerusalem. Later in the morning, the entire community was invited to join in the celebration with Israel dancing and latkes. Finally, we connected with the Masorti community in Ra'anana, via Skype to light candles together and sing Hanukkah songs.

My Israel

Temple Israel hosted an interactive discussion about how Israelis personal stories interconnect with the larger collective Israeli story. Specifically, several Israelis were invited to speak about their experiences living in Israel during specific periods of Israel's history. The highlight of the event was a direct conversation with a current Israel Defense Forces soldier via phone call.

Israel Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut Event

Yom Hazikaron commemoration was held at our main sanctuary and included the recital of *El Maleh Rachamim* and *Mourners' Kaddish*, readings from Israel's Declaration of Independence and the reading of a powerful eulogy given at the funeral of a soldier who fell in *Operation Protective Edge*. Following the Yom Hazikaron Ceremony, all congregants were invited to our social hall for the celebration of Yom

Ha'atzmaut. The social hall was decorated with Israeli flags, as well as large posters with photographs of Israel. The theme for the celebration was Israel's diversity, which came out through the range of food options, music, and activities for children. The main activities during the celebration were *Shirah Betzibur*—a collection of songs from different periods of Israel's history, whose lyrics were projected on a large screen.

How did the Ma'alot Nefesh B'Nefesh Grant Make a Difference?

Through this grant, we were able to transport our community to Israel in various ways—through Skype and phone conversations with Israelis (including an IDF soldier), by bringing in Israeli stories, through music and dancing, and of course with plenty of Israeli food. Through the grant many of our congregants of all ages were exposed to Israel's diversity and culture, and created strong bonds between them and the people of Israel. We are sincerely thankful to USCJ and Nefesh B'Nefesh for providing us the grant and the opportunity to carry out this important work in our community.

Shai Fuxman

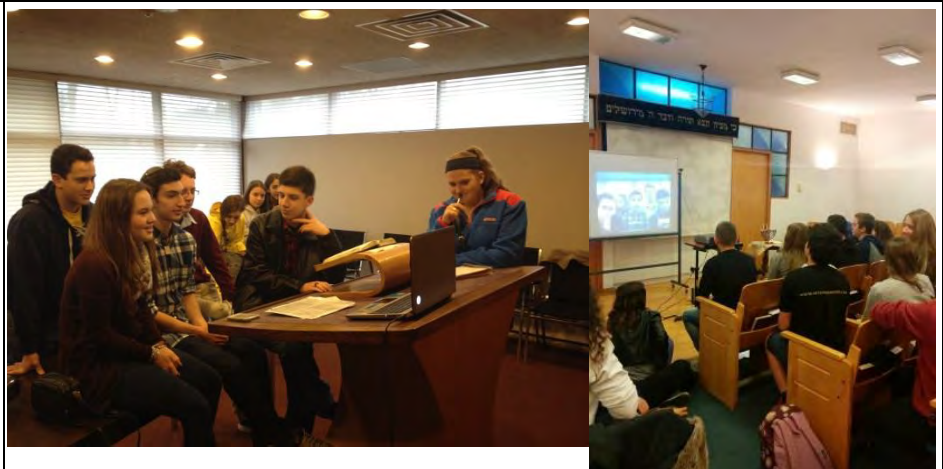
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Irit Tau-Webber

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Shira Be'Tzibur on Israel's Independence Day Celebration



Natick teens (left) and Ra'anana teens (right) in their first encounter

70 Faces of Israel/Shivim Panim L'Israel

Congregation Shaarei Kodesh, Boca Raton, FL

It has been Congregation Shaarei Kodesh's (CSK) pleasure to participate in USCJ's Ma'alot Program aimed at involving kehillot (sacred communities) in the process of deepening their connection with Israel. The objective of our Ma'alot program grant was to expose members of the Shaarie Kodesh community to opportunities that promote Israel education, engagement and advocacy. Towards this objective, CSK's "70 Faces of Israel" program goal was designed to introduce our congregation to the people of Israel, rather than the places. We want to turn "them" into "us".

With a focus on this program goal, CSK sponsored several events that illuminated Israeli life, philosophy and challenges. Sometimes this was done with humor, as in the case of the performance of Israeli/American comedian, Benji Lovitt; the presentation of an IDF Soldier's Story from Gaza (Doni Fogel); or the realities of the Middle East, conflict, conducted by Avi Melamed, Middle East strategic intelligence expert.

Our programs included:

October 26, 2014: Avi Melamed – Special Program on the Middle East

August 19, 2014: Doni Fogel – An IDF Soldier's Story from Gaza

February 7, 2015: Benji Lovitt - Israeli/American Comedian

Amy Grossblatt Pessah
pessah@comcast.net

A Galaxy of Exciting and Successful Israel Programs

Temple Beth El, Springfield, MA

Israel Day

Israel Day at Temple Beth El on this past Yom Yerushalayim was a full afternoon of events and activities centered on Israel. This included a shuk with Israeli food products, wine, and Judaica for sale from local vendors, freshly made Israeli food served café-style, and religious school classes' exhibits set up for learning about Israeli's contributions to technology, music, sports, fashion, and literature. The interactive events included Israeli dance lessons, an Israeli cooking demonstration, military drills with Israeli emissaries, an Israeli art project for children, and a film presentation of "World Class Kids," followed by discussion led by Rabbi Katz. This event was open to the wider local Jewish community beyond Temple Beth El, supported local vendors who sell Israeli products, involved students and parents from the religious school in learning and teaching about Israel, and educated attendees about less well-known facets of Israel. This program was valuable in enabling us to highlight the fantastic Israel curriculum that we teach in the religious school, and in bringing together people who do not frequently attend Temple Beth El either for learning or for services.

CAMERA: Media Bias Against Israel

The Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting (CAMERA) program led by keynote speaker Steve Stotsky, a Senior Research Analyst with CAMERA, educated adult attendees about bias against Israel in United States media and publications. This was also an open forum for people to ask questions, learn more about how CAMERA operates, and learn more about how CAMERA responds to the media. A very diverse group from all over the community attended this program, and as a direct result, our congregants at Temple Beth El want to learn more on this topic, and are interested in having similar programs in the coming year.

Israeli Emissary Program

Our community is fortunate to work with our Jewish Federation to bring two Israeli teens who defer going into the IDF for a year to be part of the emissary program, coming to the United States to teach children about Israel. Their purpose is to bring their love of Israel and intimate understanding of Israeli culture to our American community in a hands-on way. They work in the religious school classrooms, in the Hebrew High School with teens, and in our informal youth programs and some family education programs as well.

How was this Ma'alot Nefesh B'Nefesh grant important and how did it make a difference?

Without the financial support of this grant, our synagogue community would not have been able to fund the above opportunities to share the love of our homeland with our local community. These programs have sparked greater interest in learning about Israel from this community, beyond the existing robust Israel curriculum in our religious school, and have enabled the adults in particular to continue their learning process. With the shrinking demographics and resulting budgetary constraints in our synagogue, it has been challenging for us to afford the upfront costs of speakers and guests to bring their knowledge to share with our congregants; this grant gave us the opportunity to create an ongoing learning opportunity about Israel, around which we structured the year's events.

Caryn Resnick
cresnick@tbespringfield.org

YOU ARE INVITED...

To celebrate with us:

Yom Yerushalayim is a special holiday celebrating Jerusalem becoming the capital of the State of Israel!

To watch a movie:

"World Class Kids" is the story of four children from different backgrounds living through the situation in the Gaza Strip, and its impact on their lives. Appropriate for 6th grade-adult).

To learn about Israel's:

- Music scene & international impact
- Fashion designers and industry
- Technology and Innovations
- Sports and Recreation
- Literature and Publications

JUST SHOW UP ANY TIME, 3-6!

Partially funded by Ma'alot and the
Harold Grinspoon Foundation.



Israel Day
at Temple Beth El
on Yom Yerushalayim!
Sunday, May 17, 2015

3:00 - 6:00pm
Shuk • Israeli Food Café
6:15pm
Film "World Class Kids"

- Purchase Israeli Products
- Eat-in/Take out Israel Food
- Cooking Demonstration 4:00pm
- Student-led Educational Booths
- PTO Fresh-Baked Cookie Bar
- Israeli Dance Lessons
- IDF drills for children
- Israeli Art Projects

HaKhel HaMasorati

The Jewish Community of West Orange, South Orange, Livingston, Short Hills, Caldwell, Montclair and Hoboken

Jewish Community of West Orange, South Orange, Livingston, Short Hills, Caldwell, Montclair and Hoboken are important communities in the greater New York City Metropolitan area. They have a united culture under the Golda Och Academy Schechter Schools, the JCC of West Orange, and the Greater MetroWest Jewish Federation. The purpose of this program was to give a common experience of Israel through the lens of a Conservative Jew living there. After meetings with the Regional Rabbinical Assembly and key partners, Rabbi Elisha Wolfin was selected to come as the speaker. He spoke in synagogues in Caldwell, Hoboken, and West Orange, taught several different ages in the Schechter School during the days, and concluded his week with an intimate evening gathering at Golda Och Academy. His greatest success by far was the personal and engaging representation of living Conservative Judaism in Israel. Rabbi Wolfin represented the real landscape of Israeli secular society and the touchstones between that culture and who we are. Participants of all ages learned to identify with Israel in a personal and inspiring way, and came away with an optimistic yet grounded feeling about the future.

Rabbi Robert Tobin
 rabbitobin@banishalom.net



Imagining Conservative Judaism in Israel

Please join us for this informative and fascinating conversation with
Rabbi Elisha Wolfin
 Tali School educator and founder of Kahilat Ve-Ahavta,
 a vibrant congregation south of Haifa.
Free and open to the public!

Wednesday, May 6, 7:00 p.m.
 Keynote Program for the region, at Golda Och Academy
 1418 Pleasant Valley Way, West Orange, NJ
www.goldaoachacademy.org

"Elisha Wolfin is a community builder, a renaissance man in terms of knowledge and a charismatic leader; we have much to learn from this exceptional leader of the Masorti movement." —
 Rabbi Joyce Raynor, PhD, Head of School, Golda Och Academy

This program is made possible by the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, a special grant from and Nefesh B'Nefesh, and our sponsor agencies.

Nefesh B'Nefesh
 נפש בנפש

Israel Committee
 United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
 Jewish Homecoming and Transformation Center

THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM
 1000 AVENUE OF THE STARS, SUITE 1000, WEST HAVERTY, MD 21158-1000
 410.426.1200

2014 Jewish Film Festival

Beth Tzedec Congregation, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Beth Tzedec Congregation has been running a Jewish Film Festival, open to the entire Jewish community of Calgary, for the past fourteen years. One of the important goals of Beth Tzedec Congregation's Jewish Film Festival is to cultivate and nurture the relationship between the Diaspora and our Jewish homeland by creating greater engagement with Israel, raising awareness about Israel, fostering and strengthening a deeper sense of connection and commitment to Israel, and reinforcing Israel's centrality as a part of our Jewish identities.

The funding which we received from Nefesh B'Nefesh and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, through the Ma'alot Grant Program, was instrumental in helping us realize those goals at our 2014 Jewish Film Festival. Thanks to those funds, Israel was a significant and prominent component of this year's festival. The grant helped enable us to offer a wide and diverse array of films and guest speakers that, together, provided our audience with a multi-faceted glimpse of Israel – from its historical past to current social and political issues faced by contemporary Israeli society – and served to move, inspire, engage, provoke thought and engender discussion and debate around the subject of Israel.

Among the highlights of the festival was our Opening Night event, which featured documentary film *Above and Beyond*, which tells the inspiring story of the volunteers from abroad (Machal) and the critical role that they played in the birth of the State of Israel. The film's producer Nancy Spielberg (younger sister of Steven) was present at the screening. This was followed by a moving tribute to our thirteen local "Machalniks" and their families, whose proud legacy of volunteerism and connection to Israel served to remind our younger generations that we all have the potential to be a part of Israel and contribute to the country in tangible and concrete ways.

Among the other Israel-related guest speakers were Eitan Behar, Director of the World Zionist Organization's Center for Diaspora Communications, and filmmaker Ronit Ifergan, whose young family resides on a kibbutz located along the Israel–Gaza border. She provided our audience with a heartfelt and powerful first-hand account of the challenges faced by Israeli families living under the constant threat of rocket fire from Gaza.

A total of eight Israel-related films were screened at the 2014 festival, exploring numerous aspects of Israeli society and a range of subjects that included the religious-secular divide, the fraught relationship between Israelis and Germany, immigration policy and the Shin-Bet's human intelligence and counter-terrorism activities in the West Bank.

Attendance numbers at this year's festival were excellent. The festival, which is open to the entire community and is considered to be one of the premier cultural/educational/social events of the local Jewish community, reached a very broad and diverse cross-section of the community. In addition to Beth Tzedec's own members, we drew large numbers from throughout the broader Jewish community - from Orthodox and Reform to secular or unaffiliated. Our penetration of the Jewish community was further enhanced by the fact that numerous local Jewish organizations were co-sponsors of the festival, which helped promote the festival to a wider audience. Among the Jewish communal

organizations that co-sponsored at this year's festival were Calgary Jewish Federation, the Jewish National Fund, Jewish Federation's Holocaust Education & Remembrance Committee, the Jewish Historical Society, and the United Jewish Appeal's Young Leadership Division.

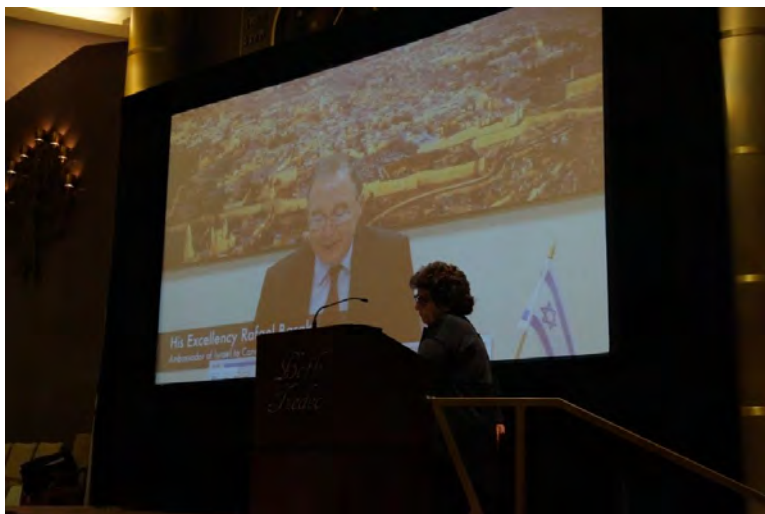
With regard to the 2014 film festival's broad demographic footprint, the editor of The Jewish Free Press, the local Jewish newspaper, praised the festival in an article that appeared in the paper's December 12th issue, in which he wrote the following:

".... the Beth Tzedec Jewish Film Festival is a prime example of big tent Judaism in our community. Each year the festival draws together thousands of people into the Beth Tzedec. Young and Old. Men, women and youth. Congregants from Beth Tzedec and other synagogues. Jews from all walks of life. Jews with all kinds of beliefs, hopes and fears. [it is] the most diverse public space in our community, sort of our cultural version of the ancient Greek agora."

Harvey Cyngizer
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650 people in attendance on opening night of the festival.



Israeli ambassador to Canada, Rafael Barak, addresses the audience via video message, paying tribute to Calgary Machalniks

CHUSY Region Shaliach & Israel Tool-Kit

Chicagoland and Wisconsin USY and Kehillot

This year we were fortunate to have a Shaliach to help us increase Israel programming in our USY Region, chapters and Kehillot. Our Shaliach worked with the chapters and Kehillot directly to customize programs that would fit their needs in terms of Israel programs. In addition, we started the foundation of an Israel program tool-kit that is shared with every chapter, in order to provide more new Israel programs with their USYers throughout the year. Below, please find an outline of all of the programs within the USCJ/USY community that were held throughout this year.

Through these programs we were able to reach over 500 people. The greater Chicago Jewish community was able to partake in some of these events and our Shaliach also ran a few programs for other Jewish organizations, promoting both CHUSY and Camp Ramah in Wisconsin.

These programs helped our USYers and Kehillah congregants gain a deeper understanding for and connection with Israel. It allowed them to open up and ask questions and receive answers. It helped them develop more meaningful Israel programming for their communities, which will continue through the years to come.

The Ma'alot Grant helped us to reach out to more USY chapters and Kehillot. It gave us an opportunity to individualize program planning, which the chapters and Kehillot found extremely helpful. Without this grant, we would have just been able to provide the chapters with basic general programs, without the ability to meet their direct needs. We also have not had the opportunity before to work with the adults in the Kehillot. This grant gave us the ability to reach out to the kehillot as a whole and to reach more people.

Julie Marder
marder@uscj.org

*Leading a Zichrona
B'Salon for CHUSY Region
for Yom Hashoah. (L)*

*Watching Beneath the
Helmet with
Congregation Beth Judea,
Long Grove, IL and
answering questions
about life in the IDF. (R)*



Talk and Taste of Israel

Beth Torah, Richardson, TX

Toda Raba USCJ and Nefesh B'Nefesh!

Your generous grant gave our Israel Advocacy Committee a wonderful opportunity. Being less than a year old and without any experience; it was difficult to create programs without adequate funding. The funds were extremely helpful; but to be able to tap into the ideas of the network of the other participating synagogues was priceless!

The grant enabled us to create the Talk & Taste of Israel lecture series. We combined great speakers with Israeli food and programs, such as:

- Gil Elan a President/CEO of Southwest Jewish Congress (a retired colonel of IDF) on updates on Israel and the Middle East
- Charles Pulman – Four days under the Israeli Gaza border with IDF
- Claire Freeman President/CEO of Texas Israel Chamber of Commerce along with the Israeli beer tasting provided by the sole distributor for Israeli beers.
- “The Sights, Sounds and Tastes of Jerusalem” program provided the Learning Center students with an opportunity to learn about and experience Jerusalem culture and foods typically eaten in Israel. Students made Mizrahs. Both the student choir and drama club presented performances focused on the multicultural life in Jerusalem.

We had a wonderful Shabbaton dedicated to Israel women from all walks of life: soldiers, poets, politicians, pilots, scientists, and leaders that made a difference in the history of Israel.

The most significant and lasting achievement was finding and creating a relationship with a Sister Congregation in Kfar Veradim, Israel. They participated via Skype in our yearly tradition of the 24 hours Holocaust vigil and Reading of the Names. During the 2014 constant rocket attacks our congregants rushed to help; by sending funds and supplies to help the misplaced families. Our relationship continues to grow as we exchange videos of each other's music and learning sessions via Skype.

Thank you very much for your support. It has not only helped at this time but will have lasting positive effects on our entire congregation.

Magdi Olah
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Making Purim bags and greetings for Israeli Soldiers

Kol EMeth and the Arava Create Together

Congregation Kol Emeth, Palo Alto, CA

Congregation Kol Emeth was able to continue our “Journey” with the receipt of the 2014-2015 Ma’alot grant. Several multi-generational collaborative art experiences were underwritten by the Ma’alot grant.

Background

Journey was the subject chosen for our unique art exhibit between the artists of Congregation Kol Emeth and artists living in the Arava Region of Israel. The project began in the Fall of 2013. There were 2 skype “meetings” and the collaborative art exhibits were displayed in both the Arava and Kol Emeth in 2014.

Ma’alot 2014-2015 provided the funds so that the exhibit could be mounted at the Oshman Family Jewish Community Center in Palo Alto which allowed thousands of community members to view the exhibit during the summer of 2014. To celebrate the successful art exhibit we had a closing reception with the artists and Kol Emeth members of approximately 60 people. We also raised funds for Operation Iron Dome.

The Arava artists donated the prints of their original art works to the Moldaw Residences, a Jewish Senior Living Group located on the Taube Koret Campus for Jewish Life in Palo Alto. It has been installed with a laminated copy of the custom catalogue of the exhibit on a specially made pedestal. A plaque recognizing the Ma’alot grant and USCJ and Nefesh B’Nefesh has been installed. This gift will allow our community to continue to recognize the important connection between members of Kol Emeth, the people of Israel and the Bay Area.

Kol Emeth religious school students created a friendship tree in collaboration with students living in the Arava. The tree was created during the Spring 2015 art chug. Pictures were shared by both groups to create trees in both the Arava and at Kol Emeth. This was a fun way for the Kol Emeth students to learn about Israel and make a personal connection.

Barbara Schapira
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Kol Emeth Artists Reception



Art Chug Friendship Tree Spring 2015