



# BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

## Celebrate Chanukah with Beth Chai (OK, It's Early — But Who's Counting?)

**Sun., Dec. 18 from 11 AM to noon at Burning Tree School.** Usually we schedule the Beth Chai Chanukah party sometime during the eight days of Chanukah.

Makes sense, right? This year is a little different, because Chanukah begins on Christmas day and continues through Jan. 2. The entire time is during school's winter holidays. So we decided to celebrate a bit early this year — but it will be festive, all the same. Our Chanukah party will be during Sunday School at Burning Tree Elementary. We'll have sufganiyot (doughnuts) and other treats. Montgomery County school rules say "no burning candles" but we could have an electric menorah, if someone will bring one. We'll have songs, stories, dreidel games, gelt, and most of all, the Beth Chai holiday spirit. Come and join us for some fun!



## Adult Education in December

We have a lively mix of programs this month: The first one of the month, on December 4, deals with Israeli society and efforts to improve the lives of Ethiopian Jewish children; the next two are continuations of the series on Jewish life-cycle practices, but the program on December 11 is only one hour, followed by our all-congregational Chanukah party (article, above). Full program notes are on page 3.

### Late Breaking News....

## Beth Chai Book & Media Sale a Smashing Success!

The second annual Beth Chai Book and Media Sale took place on Sunday, November 20, at Burning Tree School. Reliable sources report that a great time was had by all those who attended the sale. Many people were observed smiling as they struggled out the door, laden with bags and boxes of books, video games, CDs, VHS series, children's books and toys. They left well nourished by bountiful snacks and drinks, great music, and best of all, a heavy dose of schmoozing with other Beth Chai members. While final financial returns are not complete, the sale netted around \$1500 for the Beth Chai coffers. We had originally intended to list all those whose labors made the event a success, but there are just too many names to list among those who helped sort and price, transported at least a hundred boxes to the sale and the remainder back from the school, helped set up the books on tables and pack up the (continued on page 6)



Shabbat Service & Program:  
"Chanukah:  
A Time for Fun,  
A Time for Sharing"

**Friday, December 9:** Our Shabbat for this festive winter month will be a loosely structured affair designed to make it easy for adults and kids to be together and for all to find something to keep them happily occupied. There'll be food, games, and music, some perhaps reflecting differing regional traditions associated with the holiday. Adults who are in the mood might discuss how their families celebrate Chanukah and influences that can shape these celebrations: family custom, religious or cultural upbringing, and the looming presence of Christmas.



There will be the usual break after the service, but given the informal character of this month's activities, no one should feel inhibited about coming and going as desired.

(For information on location, complete details about the buffet supper, and the timing of the various elements of the evening, see page 3.)

Beth Chai Directory	Position	Telephone	Email
Suzanne Greenfield	Co-President		<a href="mailto:greenfieldshapiro@msn.com">greenfieldshapiro@msn.com</a>
Deborah Signer Balaschak	Co-President		<a href="mailto:balasig@verizon.net">balasig@verizon.net</a>
Bob Rosenblatt	Vice President		<a href="mailto:boblatt@aol.com">boblatt@aol.com</a>
Ilene Sokolsky	Treasurer		<a href="mailto:i.sokolsky@verizon.net">i.sokolsky@verizon.net</a>
Diane Page	Bookkeeper/Accts. Payable		<a href="mailto:dmpage1@comcast.net">dmpage1@comcast.net</a>
Diane Sonnenberg	Secretary		<a href="mailto:dianesonnenberg@mac.com">dianesonnenberg@mac.com</a>
Dr. Arthur Blecher	Rabbi		<a href="mailto:ablecher@starpower.net">ablecher@starpower.net</a>
Rain Zohav	Education Director		<a href="mailto:rainzohav@earthlink.net">rainzohav@earthlink.net</a>
Lynn Weinstein	Parent Coordinator		<a href="mailto:crobnlynn@earthlink.net">crobnlynn@earthlink.net</a>
Julie Zalkind	Membership/Past Pres.		<a href="mailto:Juliehz@erols.com">Juliehz@erols.com</a>
Ken Jacobson	Program Chair		<a href="mailto:kenjacobson@hotmail.com">kenjacobson@hotmail.com</a>
Sheldon Hofferman	Liturgy Ctte./Past Pres.		<a href="mailto:ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com">ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com</a>
Flora Wolf	Friendship Committee		<a href="mailto:florakw@starpower.net">florakw@starpower.net</a>
Mary Ellen Petrisko	Past President		<a href="mailto:mpetrisko@tai.edu">mpetrisko@tai.edu</a>
Gail Gertner Shapkin	Events Coordinator		<a href="mailto:ggertner6@hotmail.com">ggertner6@hotmail.com</a>
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Peggy Robin	Newsletter Editor		<a href="mailto:probin@adlerrobin.com">probin@adlerrobin.com</a>
David Elfin	Publicity Committee		<a href="mailto:elfind@verizon.net">elfind@verizon.net</a>
Josh Lubell	Social Action Committee		<a href="mailto:JoshLubell@yahoo.com">JoshLubell@yahoo.com</a>
Marji Ross	Music Committee		<a href="mailto:mross@eaglepub.com">mross@eaglepub.com</a>
Beth Chai Answering Service/Email	Beth Chai Web Site		<a href="http://www.bethchai.org">www.bethchai.org</a> ; <a href="mailto:info@bethchai.org">info@bethchai.org</a>

**Financial Need Policy:** Beth Chai welcomes anyone to attend services, become a member, or have their children attend our Jewish Family School, regardless of ability to pay. Considerations available include extended payment plans, service exchange, and fee reduction. Financial aid determination will be made on a case by case basis. Please contact Diane Page for assistance.

**b** Community News **a**

Welcome to New Members!

- Y Alan and Winnie Shapiro and children Sarah and Hannah of North Potomac, MD
- Y Mika Savir of Laytonsville, MD

Welcome to New Baby!

Becky Bishop and Philip Resnik have a new son, Harry Scott Resnik, born November 21 at 7:23 AM, weighing 7 pounds, 5.2 ounces. Congratulations, Becky, Philip, and Ben!

Congratulations

Our very own David Elfin has been inducted into the Greater Washington DC Jewish Sports Hall of Fame. A plaque with his likeness and biographical information has been added to the Hall of Fame wall at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington. David writes for the Washington Times and is the author of the Ultimate Washington Baseball Trivia Book. He is currently president of the Pro Football Writers of America.



Get Well Wishes

A speedy recovery to Roz G., who has been in the Hebrew Home in Rockville for rehabilitation. Friendship Committee Chair Flora Wolf reports that Roz. would be happy to hear from her friends at Beth Chai, whether she's still at the Hebrew Home or back in her own home.

A Note from the Jarrells in Tennessee



*Hello to All —*

We live about 45 miles from Whitwell, a small Tennessee town of about 1,600 Christians profiled in a documentary entitled "Paper Clips," which was released to theaters last year and this month is being shown on HBO (on multiple dates.)

The teens at Whitwell Middle School initially wanted to collect six million paper clips to memorialize the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust — the purpose of the collection was to be able to quantify how large a number six million was. As it turns out they received over 22 million paper clips (article continues, next page.)

## Program Notes for Adult Education - December 2005

**December 4: Helping Ethiopian-Jewish Kids Make It in Israeli Society.** In 2002, the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington joined federations from other major U.S. metropolitan areas in giving a boost to Ethiopian-Israeli preschoolers in Israel. Through the program Parents and Children Together (PACT), our local federation has taken on the responsibility for the Israeli town of Afula, providing its Ethiopian émigré children with tools designed to put them on equal footing with their native-born peers as they enter the Israeli educational system, while involving their parents in Hebrew literacy programs and health promotion activities. This effort has been supported by visits to Jewish communities in Ethiopia itself, undertaken in the aim of forestalling the cultural conflicts that marked earlier arrivals of Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Erica Pressman of the United Jewish Endowment Fund, an arm of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and a participant in PACT, will explain the program's background and chart its progress.



**December 11 and 18: Jewish Life-cycle Practices – Marriage and Divorce, Illness and Death.** Rabbi Blecher will continue this enthusiastically received series, in which—at times in the guise (and the yarmulke) of an orthodox rabbi, at times speaking straight from his humanist heart—he has so far described and explained both traditional and contemporary Jewish rituals surrounding Birth and Coming of Age. Presentations encompass the Jewish laws governing ceremonies that mark life's turning points, folk practices, and attitudes associated with these moments, and modern, humanistic alternatives for honoring and understanding them. There will be a full, two-hour session on December 11; the one on December 18 will be held to one hour to make time for this year's Beth Chai Chanukah party (see front page for details). Considering the liveliness of the discussion this topic has provoked, it is not possible to say now whether the segment on "Marriage and Divorce" will be exhausted on December 11, let alone whether the series itself will conclude on December 18 or continue into 2006.

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*(A Note from the Jarrells in Tennessee, continued from previous page)*

from all over the world, in addition to numerous letters and personal items sent by individuals, companies and celebrities. The paper clip was selected because it honored Johann Valer, the Norwegian Jew who invented it, and because the paper clip became the Norwegian symbol of resistance to the Holocaust. A paper clip was a small enough item to collect and very appropriate due to its historical significance. However, the school never expected to receive over 20 million paper clips from all over the world.



Over a number of years, Whitwell Middle School built the Children's Holocaust Memorial Museum on the grounds of their middle school, complete with a donated railroad car that took many people to the concentration camps. Max and I visited this museum this year on my birthday and, while not on the grand scale of the Holocaust Museum in DC, it was so touching and moving, considering where it is located. The moniker of this project, which was dedicated on November 9, 2001, is "changing the world, one class at a time," and in today's troubled world, is a small, but significant inspiration for tolerance and peace.

We hope Beth Chai members who may someday visit us in Tennessee will enjoy seeing this museum, as well. We often miss seeing all of you at BC, so we hope that this information will encourage people to visit Tennessee at some point in time. When we are in the DC area again, we will try to coordinate a visit to a Beth Chai activity.

Best regards,

*Roni and Max Jarrell*

P.O. Box 290  
Tullahoma, TN 37388  
Office: 800-745-0969  
Email: [CHealthC@aol.com](mailto:CHealthC@aol.com)

## Letter from the Education Director — December 2005

*Dear Congregants,*

The Beth Chai Family School has been collecting money for the many needs in our community and our world. Our initial donation for Katrina victims went to the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington Fund; the next several collections went to our own Beth Chai led effort to assist Katrina evacuees in DC; and our last collection will go to Oxfam for their international efforts.

Many members also donated furniture and other household items for the Katrina evacuees and our High Holiday collection for Jewish Social Service Agency (JSSA) was also a huge success. Thank you to the many people who made all these efforts possible. One of the most important values that we teach our children by weekly example is that tzedakah is a central Jewish value.

Those of you who attended our Yiddish Culture and Tzedakah Day do not need to be told what a wonderful day it was. Noa Baum regaled us with great stories from the Ashkenazi tradition; we made at least 250 sandwiches for Martha's Table, plus sent along a carload of supplies; we raised our largest amount ever for the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership; and we enjoyed many traditional favorites such as kasha varnishkes, noodle kugel, and matzah ball soup. We missed those of you who were unable to attend. We were very happy to host the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Community Group and benefited from their many contributions to the day, including the learning centers on folk dancing and Yiddish proverbs. For me it was a pleasure to work with their Education Director, Arlene Berger. We are also very grateful for the grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, which made this program (that has long been a dream of mine) a reality.



As we go to press, I have just received an email from Philip Resnik that by November 20 Marji Ross and Robin Graine may be taking over for him as our song leaders. The reason for this news, which might seem alarming at first for those of us whose days have been cheered by Philip's songs and teachings every Sunday morning for years, is actually a good thing: Philip and his wife Becky Bishop are expecting their new baby, and so Philip will be taking some paternity leave this year. For those of you new to our congregation, you may know that in his day job, Philip is a professor of communications at the University of Maryland, working in both linguistics and computer communications. Despite this busy schedule, he volunteers to add this essential piece to our program. As we continue to build a wonderful repertoire of songs that we can all sing together, our sense of community grows along with our knowledge. This is in large part due to Philip's leadership.

As the Education Director, and as someone who can barely carry a tune, I know that it is not a good situation to be too dependent on one person. Marji Ross, with her beautiful voice, had already stepped in to substitute for Philip on occasion and I noticed that Robin Graine both loved to sing and had a lovely voice. I approached both of them about attending this year's Partnership in Jewish Life and Learning (PJLL) six-session course for beginning song leaders. Whether or not the logistics work out for the course, both Marji and Robin have been apprenticing with Philip this year. Then Matt Krouner joined our staff and told me that he played the guitar. With these three people on board, we will be in good hands during Philip's leave of absence.

Last is our Chanukah party! This year, because the actual date of the first night of Chanukah is December 25, which places all the rest of Chanukah squarely in our winter break, we have decided to celebrate a bit early. We will have our Chanukah party on Sunday, December 18, during the second half of Sunday School, from 11 AM to 12 noon, at Burning Tree. We will have sufganiyot (doughnuts) in the Israeli tradition, play dreidel and other games, sing songs, and hear a wonderful story by I. L. Peretz, one of the most influential of Yiddish writers. Anyone who would like to help with the refreshments should contact Gail Gertner Shapkin ([ggertner6@hotmail.com](mailto:ggertner6@hotmail.com)). Anyone who would like to help with the games and other entertainment should contact me. (Cont'd, next page.)

# Jewish Federation Super Sunday Is December 11

by Rain Zohav and Josh Lubell

In December, we have a chance to contribute back to the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington by volunteering to make phone calls on the Federation's Super Sunday. This is a special day each year in which our community comes together to raise funds that support and enrich the quality of life for Jews locally, in Israel, and around the world.

Super Sunday 2005 is December 11 at all three JCCs this year. The more money that is raised, the more the Federation can accomplish. There are also evening calling sessions available from December 5–8. Even if you cannot participate in the fundraising itself, please consider donating to the Federation when someone calls you.

Beth Chai will be having a speaker at our December 4 adult education program to talk about the work the Federation is doing for Ethiopian Jews, and we can see the direct effect of the many grants we have received over the years from the Initiative in Congregational Education. We also benefit from the Federation's contribution to the Partnership in Jewish Life and Learning in too many ways to enumerate here. More information is available at [www.supersunday2005.org](http://www.supersunday2005.org).




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## Report from Beth Chai's Help the Homeless Mini-Walk

by Josh Lubell

Special thanks are due to Howie Feinstein for managing Beth Chai's "Help The Homeless" mini-walk on October 30. The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Jewish Community Group participated with us, and together our members contributed over \$1,500 (including pre-registrations). The Fannie Mae Foundation will add to these funds, which will be donated to our partner agency, the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership.

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*(Rain Zohav's school letter, continued from previous page)*

Our winter break begins on Sunday, December 25 and extends through January 7. We return to Beth Chai Family School on January 8. Have a wonderful Chanukah and winter break. Enjoy the many family celebrations that occur at this time of year. I look forward to continuing the year with our excellent staff, wonderful children and dedicated parents!

B'Shalom,

*Rain Zohav*




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*Shabbat Schedule and Location, continued from front page*

**7 to 8 PM:** A buffet supper, costing \$10 per person and set out at 7, is an occasion for members and potential members to get better acquainted or caught up. Those wishing to join in for the meal are asked to sign up by contacting Ken Jacobson before noon on Thursday, December 8, either by phone at 202-462-2472 or by email at [kenjacobson@hotmail.com](mailto:kenjacobson@hotmail.com).

**8 to 8:30 PM:** Beth Chai's Shabbat service, which features a Humanistic Kiddush, thought-provoking readings, and opportunities to participate for children wishing to do so.

**8:30 to 9:30-10 PM:** The activities described on the front page.

Location of all Beth Chai Shabbats  
(unless otherwise indicated)

Beth Chai Congregation at River Road U.C., Fireside Rm. 2nd Fl.  
6301 River Rd. (entrance on Whittier Blvd.),  
Bethesda, MD

## An Update from Rachel Feldman on the Evacuee Resettlement Project

In the Thursday, 11/3 Washington Post, the front page of the Metro section had a picture and short article about the Mendez family (mom and 6 children) from New Orleans that was moved into a DC townhouse last week. Our resettlement project provided the bulk of the furniture, linens, kitchen stuff, desks for kids, computers, TVs, bikes and other stuff to set up that household.

With the holidays coming up, we can have some other opportunities to help. We are being invited to participate on an ongoing basis in a variety of activities. Anyone interested in the activities listed below can contact me at the email address below and I will happily make connections.

Here are some activities that people may have an interest in:

- t Shop for a family's holiday gifts.** The social workers are taking information on the needs/desire of families with children, including child's age, gender, clothing size, and wishes, and for each family they will create a tree ornament bell listing that person's information. The bells will hang on a tree at Social Services. If you would like to shop and wrap gifts for a specific family, I would be happy to get you a bell/family and make the coordinating arrangements. The donating family can attach a card to the gifts. This could be a great way to get kids involved in giving that is more personal.
- t Deliver food to seniors.** Food baskets are being prepared for senior citizens in DC. If any of our teenagers would like to help with the delivery of food to low-income senior citizens, arrangements may be made for them to do this. A group goes door-to-door with shopping bags full of food, working through a senior citizen's program. We will provide documentation for community service hours. This offer has been extended on a personal basis just to our group.
- t Supplement holiday meals for evacuee families in their new homes.** Gift Cards for Safeway and/or Giant are being distributed to families before Thanksgiving and Christmas so they can buy the kind of food they prefer.
- t Acknowledge the hard work of social service staff.** I was thinking it would be nice to do something to recognize the hard work of the social services staff. Their numbers were cut before the hurricane crisis hit, and their case loads have increased. They load their cars with our donations and go door-to-door to visit clients, sometimes in some not-very-hospitable neighborhoods. Our donations often make it easier for them to visit and help clients. Many of them work long hours and on weekends and nights to be able to locate their clients and meet their needs. I thought it would be nice to bring in a bunch of edible goodies as a surprise one day in December before the holidays. If anyone would like to donate baked items, finger food, or help plan/deliver for such an event, let me know.

—Rachel

[rachelfeldman@cox.net](mailto:rachelfeldman@cox.net)

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*(Beth Chai Book and Media Sale, continued from front page)*

remainder, and finally helped during the sale itself with working the checkout station and a million other chores.

We do want to give special thanks to the following:

- & Ellie Vigdor and Bega Toolanen for keeping us well fed.
- & Loretta Garcia and David Elfin for use of their garage for storing all the material and hosting the many people who worked sorting and pricing everything.
- & Byron Hulcher, Celia Feldman and Mariama Scott for their adult-level effort as teen volunteers.
- & Alan Feldenkris for his wonderful saxophone playing and arranging for the music
- & Celia Feldman for her cello playing
- & Rachel Feldman, without whose organizing genius, the sale itself would have not gone so smoothly.
- & And, of course, to Ron Leve — the person who had the motivation and power to collect the books and bring the whole project to fruition



## Can You Help? Beth Chai Needs....

### A New Editor for the Newsletter

After six years of editing the Beth Chai newsletter I am interesting in passing the torch (and the newsletter software) to someone else. Anyone with a bit of editing experience and a decent eye for layout can do this, and it's one of the more interesting volunteer jobs at Beth Chai. Familiarity with Microsoft Publisher is helpful but by no means required. (I taught myself the program, and I would be very happy to teach it to a volunteer in a couple of sessions.) I'm thinking that the transition to a new editor should be accomplished sometime over the summer. Interested members, please email me or give me a call. I'd be delighted to talk to you or meet with you and show you the newsletter templates.



*Peggy Robin*

202-686-9132 (home/office)  
[probin@adlerrobin.com](mailto:probin@adlerrobin.com)

### Thank You

...to Alan Kotok, who has been the assistant newsletter editor since April 2004 and is stepping down at the end of this month.

### A New Webmaster

During the time that my wife, Peggy Robin, has been newsletter editor, I've been the webmaster of the Beth Chai web site, [www.BethChai.org](http://www.BethChai.org). Like Peggy, I'm looking for a volunteer to take over the site sometime between now and the end of summer. The new webmaster should have some experience with webpage design and maintenance. It's not a difficult site to manage — and the new webmaster is welcome to redesign the site, too.

Running the site involves:

- Posting the newsletter in Adobe format once a month
- Updating the Events page, School Calendar, and Adult Ed box once a month
- Updating the Social Action page about two or three times a year
- Posting new registration forms annually
- Posting snow closing information in the fall and taking it down in the spring
- Checking occasionally on the PayPal link and other site links

I'm happy to work with anyone who's interested.

*Bill Adler*

[webgeek@my.netmails.net](mailto:webgeek@my.netmails.net)  
 202-986-9275 (office)

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## Grant Writers

Does anyone out there have any interest/experience/talent/curiosity or extra time to help us navigate the wild and wonderful world of grant applications? There are opportunities out there for either the congregation or the Sunday school to get money for projects and activities — but we need help finding them and responding to them. Please, if you know something about this area or you are willing to learn, contact either of the co-presidents (email addresses and phone numbers in the Directory on page 2).

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## Get All Your Holiday Shopping Done And Benefit Beth Chai at the Same Time

Did you know that Amazon.com sells everything under the sun? In addition to books, music, and movies, you can buy electronics, housewares, jewelry, clothing, toys ... you name it, you can find it on Amazon. And did you know that if you enter Amazon.com through the Beth Chai web site, Beth Chai will receive a rebate on any purchase you make — at no extra cost to you? So why go to a crowded mall? Shop at home and help Beth Chai ... and don't stop when the holidays are over. This is a mitzvah you can do all year round! Just go to <http://www.bethchai.org/books.html> and you'll see the Amazon search box. Happy shopping!

**amazon.com**



# Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sun., Dec. 4 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: Jewish Federation project to assist Ethiopian-Israeli preschoolers.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Dec. 4 from 7 to 9 PM	Beth Chai board meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	Home of Julie & David Zalkind in N. Arlington. Call 703-522-1023 or email <a href="mailto:juliehz@erols.com">juliehz@erols.com</a> to RSVP and get directions.
Fri., Dec. 9 at 8 PM; light supper begins at 7 PM	Shabbat service & program on Chanukah traditions shared by Beth Chai members. See front page article for details.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, Fireside Rm., 2nd fl., 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Dec. 11 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: Jewish Life-Cycle Practices (Part 3), led by Rabbi Blecher.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Dec. 18 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed. 11 AM to noon for party.	Sunday School. First hour: Adult Ed. discussion of Jewish Life-Cycle Practices (Part 4), led by Rabbi Blecher.; second hour: <b>All-Congregational Chanukah Party!</b> Songs, food, fun & games for everyone.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Dec. 27 and Sun., Jan. 1	Winter break.	No Sunday School. See you on Jan. 8!



## Beth Chai Congregation

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**Address Correction Requested**

