



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

Beth Chai Elects New Board

Congratulations to the newly elected members of the Beth Chai board. At the annual general membership meeting on May 21, congregation members elected a new Vice President, Mike Wexler. Mike will serve as co-pilot to Deborah Signer Balaschak, who will continue on as President. Joining the board are: Howie Feinstein, as the new chair of the Social Action Committee; Andrew Strongin, joining Ken Jacobson as co-chair of the Programs Committee; and Rob Weinstein, joining Sheldon Hoffer as co-chair of the Liturgy Committee. Returning board members are: Ilene Sokolsky as Treasurer and Ron Leve as chair of Fundraising. Suzanne Greenfield will be stepping down as Co-president but will serve as Secretary. Please see the updated directory on page 2. Members of the new board, as well as those from the previous board, will be meeting over the summer in a retreat to plan for a smooth and productive transition. Beth Chai members, please take note that you are welcome at all regular board meetings. We very much hope to see you, and we encourage you to play an active role in your congregation.

A Note from Outgoing Co-President Suzanne Greenfield

Like many people, I have had a complicated relationship with religion, religious practice, and religious institutions. Joining a congregation seemed both inevitable and impossible to me. Where could I find a place where people were not judgmental or defensive? Where questions were asked because they have no answers, not so that you could show what you know. Where people can laugh at themselves and take each other seriously. Where you can listen with respect and still keep questioning. No, not everyone at Beth Chai shares my personal contradictions or frustrations, but they certainly let me express them openly. I am still surprised when I hear myself say, "my synagogue" or, even more shocking, "my Rabbi." Yet Beth Chai has become a place where I feel very much at home and where I can continue to learn in a warm and thought-provoking environment. As I finish my two-year term as Co-President, I want to thank all the people who have said yes to me when I asked them to do a job, big or small. I am pretty sure that includes each and every one of you. But know that you have given me much more than your help on a task — you have given me a place where I can continue to reconcile the irreconcilable in a warm and generous community filled with smart and caring people. Thank you.

— Suzanne Greenfield



Shabbat Service & Program "Do-It-Yourself Shabbat" To Precede Summer Break

Friday, June 9. This is the last chance to celebrate Shabbat before the summer break, and — aside from the customary service and buffet supper — the nature of the celebration will be up to the celebrants. Do you have a topic you'd like to discuss? An activity you'd like to propose? A movie you'd like to see? Music you'd like to hear? Or would you simply like to socialize? Please make your suggestions and preferences known as soon as is convenient by emailing Ken Jacobson at kenjacobson@hotmail.com. We'll do our best to arrange an enjoyable send-off into summer.

Beth Chai encourages families with children to attend Shabbat evenings and follows a format intended to make their participation easy and enjoyable. There is a clear break between the service and the program that follows (if, this month, a program does indeed follow). Those who wish to attend the service only should feel free to leave during the break.

Schedule

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, June 8, either by *(Shabbat information continued on page 3.)*



Beth Chai Directory	Position	Telephone	Email
Deborah Signer Balaschak	President		balasig@verizon.net
Mike Wexler	Vice President		ela.mike@verizon.net
Ilene Sokolsky	Treasurer		i.sokolsky@verizon.net
Diane Page	Bookkeeper/Accts. Payable		dmpage1@comcast.net
Suzanne Greenfield	Secretary/Past President		greenfieldshapiro@msn.com
Dr. Arthur Blecher	Rabbi		ablecher@starpower.net
Rain Zohav	Education Director		rainzohav@earthlink.net
Lynn Weinstein	Parent Coordinator		crobnlynn@earthlink.net
Julie Zalkind	Membership Chair		juliehz@erols.com
Ken Jacobson	Program Co-chair		kenjacobson@hotmail.com
Andrew Strongin	Program Co-chair		astrongin@starpower.net
Sheldon Hofferma	Liturgy Co-chair		ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com
Rob Weinstein	Liturgy Co-chair		crobnlynn@earthlink.net
Ron Leve	Fundraising Chair		theron@comcast.net
Howie Feinstein	Social Action/Publicity		khfeinstein@us.net
Marji Ross	Music Committee		mross@eaglepub.com
Peggy Robin	Newsletter Editor		probin@adlerrobin.com
Julie Vigdor	Email Announcements		vigdors@aol.com
Beth Chai Answering Service/Email	Beth Chai Web Site		www.bethchai.org ; info@bethchai.org

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.

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b Community News a

Condolences

We are saddened to report the loss of Mac Ross, husband of Marji Ross and father of Sarah, Trina, and Rebecca. Mac passed away on April 28 after a long battle with stomach cancer. The congregation sends its deepest condolences to the family.

A Note about the Newsletter



Beth Chai News is published 11 times a year. The next issue is the combined July/August issue, which should arrive in your mailbox around the second week of July. Can't wait for your newsletter? Make sure you get all Beth Chai announcements by keeping your current email address on the Beth Chai weekly announcements list. If you want to add or change your email address on that list, just send the information to Beth Chai's Email List Coordinator, Julie Vigdor at vigdors@aol.com. To ensure uninterrupted receipt of Beth Chai emails, please be sure to designate all email containing the term "Beth Chai" as "not spam" in your anti-spam filter. You can also check the "events" page of our web site, www.BethChai.org, for dates and times of Beth Chai programs, get-togethers, and services.

Bar Mitzvah of Michael Kameron

Beth and David Kameron cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the Bar Mitzvah service for their son Michael on **Saturday, June 3 at 10:00 AM** at the Garrett Park Town Hall, 10814 Kenilworth Avenue, Garrett Park, Maryland. A bread and wine Kiddush will follow the service. If you need directions, please contact David Kameron, dkameron1@verizon.net.

Bat Mitzvah of Mariyama Zohav Scott

Walter Scott and Rain Zohav cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the Bat Mitzvah service of their daughter Mariyama Zohav Scott on **Saturday, June 10 at 10:30 AM** at Paint Branch Unitarian Church, 3215 Powder Mill Road, Adelphi, Maryland. You are also invited to a Kiddush and festive luncheon following the service. Please RSVP to 301-294-8849 if you plan to attend the Kiddush and luncheon so that we can plan for the right number of attendees.

Social Action: Report from Community Work Day

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Community Work Day tree-mulching activities on April 23. We had a great turnout — enough volunteers to help Friends of Sligo Creek with tree maintenance at two different sites! Photos taken during the event are online at <http://www.bethchai.org/photos.html>.

— Josh Lubell

And at the Burning Tree School site we made 12 beautiful door wreaths for the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership and over 75 mailbox surprises for the Children's Inn at NIH. Everyone was completely involved in the various activities, from grandparents to kindergartners. The collective creativity and thoughtfulness was inspiring. The folks at the NIH Children's Inn loved the articles we brought in. Thanks to all who helped out and participated.

—Rain Zohav

Progress in Sudan

by Sheldon Hofferan



Many thanks to all the Beth Chai members and friends who have given so generously during the past year of your money, time, and effort to help stop the genocide in Sudan and get needed food and medicine to the refugees in Darfur and other camps. This past fall, we sent several thousand dollars in donations, and last month we delivered or mailed over 130 postcards (of the over 800,000) to the White House urging greater involvement in the crisis by our government. The results of the collective efforts: people who truly need help are receiving it (though not enough), President Bush has strongly endorsed this effort, extra funds for humanitarian aid have been allocated by Congress, the State Department is using its diplomatic influence, and the parties to the conflict have agreed to stop fighting and talk about ending it. To me, this is tangible proof that



the basic tenet of Humanistic Judaism – that we can and must work to make the world a better place – is valid and very important. Once again, thanks to those of you who helped.

(Shabbat Schedule, continued from front page)

email at kenjacobson@hotmail.com or by phone at 202-462-2472.

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 10 PM: To be determined—by you!

Location of all Beth Chai Shabbat programs
(unless otherwise indicated):

Beth Chai Congregation at River Road U.C.
Fireside Room, 2nd Floor, 6301 River Road, Bethesda
(entrance on Whittier Blvd.)

Summer Havdalah & Potluck On July 29 — Save the Date!

Beth Chai members Cindy Welsh and Scott Greenberg have once again graciously volunteered to host our summer Havdalah/Potluck/Swim Party at their home in Potomac on July 29 from 6 to 8:30 PM. More details will arrive in the July/August issue of the newsletter, as well as in the weekly email announcements list. If you already know if you're coming or would like to volunteer to help, please contact Cindy at cindywelsh@gwellc.com or Scott at sagreenberg@gwellc.com.



Letter from the Education Director — June 2006

Dear Congregants,

This is the last column of this Family School Year. We meet for our last day of School on **June 4** and will end with a picnic – rain or shine! Please bring a potluck dish that serves 8 to share. Beth Chai will provide drinks, plates, napkins and cutlery.

We will also be doing one last *tzedakah* project of the school year. The Manna Food Bank of Montgomery County is low on food. We are asking that in honor of Shavuot (which is June 1), everyone bring in a donation of canned goods or hardy fresh fruit, such as apples, pears or oranges. The boxed sidebar has the details. In ancient times, the Israelites brought offerings of the first fruits to the Temple In Jerusalem. These were distributed to the priests (who had no land of their own) and the poor. In this tradition, it has become a custom to donate food to the poor on Shavuot.

Maybe next year, we can combine a celebration of this holiday with our *tzedakah* donation. I have great memories of Shavuot on the kibbutz where I lived as a member for seven years. This month, I will be leading an adult ed session on the Book of Ruth, one of the traditional texts of this holiday. (For details, see the article on page 5.)

This has been a tremendous year for growth for our school. As we grow, it becomes more possible to have a class for each grade. For instance, next year, there will be both a kindergarten and a first grade. We are delighted that Susan Stewart is returning to teach our pre-school, which meets twice each month, and that Michele Sturm will be continuing to teach the kindergarten. Ophra Paul, who was a one-on-one aide this year, but substituted as Hebrew teacher, will return to teach Hebrew for us this coming year. Ophra has a great rapport with the students, and a great Hebrew background, so we are thrilled that she will be our new Hebrew teacher.

As of the newsletter deadline, there is an excellent possibility that Josh Fine will also be returning to teach the second/third grade.

We will also be adding a post-mitzvah once-a-month-class to our school next year. This class will be for any teen who wishes to attend, and it will encompass a variety of interesting topics led by guest speakers, including comparative religion and issues such as the Jewish perspective on peer pressure, body image, and ethical dilemmas. We will also plan some field trips for this group.

All of our other teachers are moving on to other things, including junior year abroad, graduate school, new jobs in new communities, etc. We wish all of them well and thank them for helping make Beth Chai Family School a vibrant place of learning.

A special thanks to Matt Krouner for getting our rising teen program off the ground. We wish him well in all his future endeavors. This teen program could not have happened without a grant for the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington.

(Article continued at top of next page.)

REMEMBER THE SHAVU'OT FOOD DRIVE ON JUNE 4!

On the last day of Sunday school, June 4, in honor of Shavu'ot, we will be collecting non-perishable foods and fresh fruit for the Manna Food Bank of Montgomery County.

The most needed non-perishables are foods with protein, including:

- Ⓟ Canned tuna
- Ⓟ Peanut butter
- Ⓟ Beans
- Ⓟ Cereal
- Ⓟ Powdered milk
- Ⓟ Baby food



(Rain Zohav's School Letter continued from previous page.)

We are interviewing prospective teachers, speaking with members of the congregation, and trying to get the word out about what a great workplace Beth Chai is, and what an opportunity it is to make a difference in the lives of Jewish children. On page 6 you'll find a flyer to post in schools, libraries, or other locations that might be a good place to find teachers. Please feel free to post the text on any relevant e-boards or listservs, too. And if you know someone who might be interested, please let me know.

As Education Director, I can never thank the teachers, parents, or students enough for making Beth Chai the wonderful school that it is. When I tell prospective teachers about Beth Chai, I am always reminded of our unique approach, and of the commitment and dedication of the parents. It really does make a huge difference in the atmosphere of Beth Chai that we have parents on the premises every Sunday that we have school, and that we have adult ed every Sunday that we have school. Family Education is the cutting edge of Jewish education.

A special thanks goes to Lynn Weinstein, who took on the task of being the parent volunteer coordinator this year. She has done a valiant job in trying to fill all the many needs of the school. Of course, she couldn't do her job without all of the parents pitching in on a regular basis. So thank you to all of you, also.

During the summer we will be having a potluck and Havdalah (end of Shabbat) service on Saturday, July 29, from 6:00 to 8:30 PM at the Greenberg/Welsh home. (See box, page 3.) This is a great time to keep connected to Beth Chai folks and cement the friendships that make returning in the fall more fun and meaningful. It is also a great time to introduce your friends to Beth Chai. The Havdalah service has been termed "short and sweet," which is exactly how it should be as we say goodbye to Shabbat and hello to the new week. All members are encouraged to attend.

Once again — this is a great way to remind everyone of our sense of community.

Thanks to the board for the wonderful support of the school and the teachers. Thanks to all of you, we were able to give the teachers bonuses from the proceeds of the auction.

*B'Shalom,
Rain Zohav*

Adult Ed Ends School Year By Examining the Book of Ruth

June 4: The Book of Ruth, in Honor of Shavu'ot. The Book of Ruth is traditionally read on Shavu'ot, which this year falls on June 1. Beth Chai Education Director Rain Zohav will lead a discussion of this many-faceted work that considers its literary qualities, possible political motives influencing its composition, the glimpse it affords of the life of our ancestors, the precedent it offers for conversion, and questions raised in some contemporary feminist commentaries. Reading the Book of Ruth, which is only a few pages in length, in advance of the session is encouraged but not required.

As Shavu'ot was an agricultural holiday — the occasion on which the Israelites brought offerings of their first fruits to the Temple in Jerusalem, both for the priests, who had no land of their own, and for the poor — the theme of gleaning in the Book of Ruth fits in well with the holiday. All are asked, in this same spirit of gleaning, to bring in canned goods or fresh fruit for the Manna Food Bank. The box accompanying Rain's School Letter on page 4 has the details.



All adult education sessions take place from 10 AM to noon at Burning Tree School
7900 Beech Tree Road, Bethesda, MD
Programs are free. Coffee and bagels provided.

End of the School Year Teacher Reports

Preschool, by Susan Stewart

This past semester, the preschool class has been learning about the many spring holidays that occur in the Jewish calendar. Our class is based on discovery learning, and we set up centers for the children to explore the theme for that week. For example, during Tu B'Shevat we planted parsley and used the sprouts for our preschool Passover seder. The children enjoyed creating puppets for Purim and reenacting Esther's story. We also celebrated Israel's birthday and built the Wailing Wall out of Legos in our blocks center. The children wrote notes and placed them in the cracks of our wall. A highlight of our day is always music time. The children love it when the music teacher(s) arrive, and we often dance a simplified Israeli dance to the songs that we are learning. **Y**



Kindergarten/First Grade, by Michele Sturm

What did you do in Sunday School today?" "Nothing," or "I forgot." How familiar does this sound to any parent? Hah! The class has been busy, engaged and lively, both on the playground and in class.

The past two Sunday School times we've been learning about Israel. The first Sunday morning we took a virtual trip to Israel, complete with passports, and boring plane and bus rides. We visited three cities: Tel Aviv, the busy city (tall buildings, lots of cars, the sea); Jerusalem, the holy city (prayers at the Western Wall); and Eilat, the fun city (the beach and the Red Sea). The students were encouraged to write postcards from their favorite city. No surprise, most chose Eilat.

The next Sunday we celebrated Israel Independence Day with blue and white cupcakes, and by making blue and white flags. We talked about how all the different people in Israel don't always get along. We talked about how things are different and how things are the same for Israeli kids their age.

Before that, the class learned about plagues, the grosser the better, and the symbolic foods on the Passover seder plate. Deceit, treachery, bravery, and a heroine highlighted our learning about the major characters of Purim.

I have enjoyed working with the class this year and seeing how much they have learned. **Y**

2nd/3rd Grade, by Josh Fine



We have had quite a year in the 2nd/3rd grade classroom. Lately, we have been reviewing all of the major concepts we learned this year, including the patriarchs like Abraham and Isaac, and the holidays that make up the Jewish year. In addition, we've been making all sorts of fun crafts like picture frames and jelly bean groggers. We even decorated a cake for Israeli Independence day! Overall, it's been a fantastic year and we will all miss spending Sundays together with all the friends we've made. On behalf of Rachael Brekke and myself, we have absolutely loved working with your children and hope everyone has a happy and healthy summer. **Y**

5th/6th Grade, by Matt Krouner

The 5th-6th Grade class had an excellent second half of the year! After making old American synagogues out of candy, we moved on to more current discussions of Jewish-American influence in America. A highlight was learning about the role of Jews in the civil rights movement. We talked a lot about the "Mississippi Burning" trial and some of the Jews who worked closely with Martin Luther King, Jr. The class is looking forward to displaying the timeline they created, which is a visual representation of everything they learned this year.

(Teacher Reports continue on next page.)

(Teacher Reports, continued from previous page)

Hebrew in the K/1st and 5th/6th Grades, by Greg Allen

This was a great year for me at Beth Chai. After living three years in Israel, living on kibbutzim while studying Hebrew, and serving in the Israeli Defense Forces, I was very happy to have the opportunity to teach Hebrew to many of your wonderful children. Over the course of the year, in both the K/1 and 5/6 classes, the students learned many of the Hebrew words associated with Jewish and Israeli holidays. They learned basic phrases, how to count, and many other useful words that add to the Jewish experience and that could be useful on a trip to Israel. The 5/6 class also began to learn to read in Hebrew. All in all, despite some resistance to learning a foreign language (other than Spanish) among the 5/6 graders, I feel these kids made some real improvement over the course of the year. **Y**

Teen/Rising Teen Program, by Matt Krouner

The Teen/Rising Teen Program had two fun events by the end of the year. The first was a bowling extravaganza which included lots of strikes, spares, and celebrating! We had a great turnout and hope to make it a yearly ritual. On May 20 we went to King's Dominion to celebrate the end of the year. We were all very excited about this trip and happy that we had clear skies! **Y**

[Editor's Note: The 4th Grade and the Mitzvah Class did not submit reports.]

Teacher Recruitment Flyer: Please feel free to copy and post the notice below on bulletin boards at schools, libraries, and other locations where teachers, parents, or college students might see it. Thanks!

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Teachers Needed for Jewish Humanist Sunday School

Beth Chai, the Greater Washington Jewish Humanist congregation, www.bethchai.org, is recruiting teachers for its Sunday school for the 2006-2007 school year for grades 2 through 7. Enthusiasm and willingness to learn are valued as much as experience! In other words, if you've never taught at a Jewish Sunday school before, but you're interested in Jewish history & culture, you're a good communicator, and you like working with kids, we are happy to train you.



The congregation's school is located in Bethesda at Burning Tree Elementary, 7900 Beech Tree Road, but it draws its member households from the entire Washington metropolitan area. Classes are on Sunday mornings, from 10 to noon, after a music assembly that starts at 9:30, from September to the first Sunday in June. We can arrange transportation from the Metro to the Sunday school, if needed.

If interested, please call Rain Zohav, Education Director, at 301-294-8849 or email rainzohav@earthlink.net.

Please feel free to give this notice to other parents, teachers, and childcare professionals who might be interested in a Sunday School teaching position. College and graduate students are also welcome to apply.

Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sat., June 3 at 10:00 AM	Bar Mitzvah of Michael Kameron. All members of Beth Chai are invited to attend the service, which will be followed by a bread and wine Kiddush.	Garrett Park Town Hall, 10814 Kenilworth Avenue, Garrett Park, Maryland.
Sun., June 4 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed. 12-1 PM - Picnic	Adult Ed. Topic: "The Book of Ruth - In Honor of Shavu'ot." Discussion led by Rain Zohav. See program notes, page 5. Potluck picnic for all follows immediately after the end of the last day of Sunday school.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Fri., June 9 at 8:00 PM; light supper begins at 7:00 PM	Shabbat service & program: Open Program!	Beth Chai congregation at RRUC, Fireside Room, 2nd fl., 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sat., June 10 at 10:30 AM	Bat Mitzvah of Mariyama Zohav Scott. All members of Beth Chai are invited to attend the service, which will be followed by a Kiddush and festive luncheon. Please RSVP to 301-294-8849 if you plan to attend the Kiddush and luncheon.	Paint Branch Unitarian Church, 3215 Powder Mill Road, Adelphi, Maryland.
Sun., June 25 at 7 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 juliehz@erols.com to RSVP and get directions.
Sat., July 29 from 6 to 8 PM	Summer Havdalah Service/Potluck/Swim Party.	Home of Cindy Welsh & Scott Greenberg in Potomac. Complete details will be in the July/August newsletter and on the Beth Chai email announcements list.



Beth Chai Congregation

River Road U.C.
6301 River Road
Bethesda, MD 20817

Voicemail: 301-229-7400
Email: info@bethchai.org
Website: www.bethchai.org

Address Correction Requested

