

Humanorah

the newsletter of the Society for Humanistic Judaism
affiliated with the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews



Winter, 2009

Vol. 31 No. 2

TEEN/COLLEGE CONCLAVE TO TAKE TO THE WOODS

Giggle, laugh, reflect. Hug your old friends. Hug your new ones too. Hike through the woods or just hang out. But whatever you do, if you're in 8th - 12th grade or have reached the ages of 18-25, don't miss an opportunity to attend the HuJews Teen and College Conclave.

Set aside the weekend of April 17-19, now, and plan to come to Michigan for a great time. You'll gather and greet each other on Friday at 3:30 p.m. at the Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills and then make your way out to the Butzel Conference Center campsite in time for a *Shabbat* dinner and service. By 9:00 p.m., you'll be ready for an hour's night hike—after all, the theme *is* Environmental Ethics, isn't it—followed by free time, if you're still up for it.

Saturday will bring workshops, outdoor initiatives, a community service project, dinner and a *Havdala* service, a talent show and time, once again, to just hang out. Sunday morning, you'll head back to the Farmington Hills area for a two-hour stop at the Holocaust Memorial Center, then lunch and *happy-to-have-met-you* but *oh-so-teary* goodbyes, knowing there's nothing like the friends you've made on the HuJews Teen and College get-together.



So delay no longer. Space may still be available. Hurry. Send in all the registration forms you received, along with your check or money order to



Society for Humanistic Judaism
28611 W. 12 Mile Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

For further information or if you've lost your registration materials, please contact the SHJ

office at info@shj.org or AJ at aj@hujews.org or phone 248-478-7610.

Harriet Maza, SHJ editor



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SECULAR JEWISH CIRCLE of PUGET SOUND

CANADA

ORAYNU, TORONTO, ON

JEWS RALLY FOR JUSTICE FOR 570,000 PEOPLE IN D.C. WITHOUT VOTING RIGHTS

The Society for Humanistic Judaism has adopted a resolution supporting federal voting rights for residents of Washington D.C.

District of Columbia residents are the constituents of NO representative or senator, but of course, they pay federal taxes as well as local ones. The federal government exercises control that does not apply anywhere else in the country over how locally collected taxes may be used in the district. The district needs YOU to contact YOUR senators and representatives to say that it is time for civil rights for all American citizens. The House passed legislation in support of D.C. voting rights in 2007 but the Senate did not. With President Obama supporting this, chances are improved.

Jewish organizations are now working together to make this issue a Jewish Justice issue. We humanists can do our part. Please call your senators and representative TODAY and say that you support the same voting rights for the citizens of the District of Columbia as are available to citizens in the rest of the United States. For more information on steps you can take to help, go to www.dcvote.org.

SHJ Statement in Support of Voting Representation for the District of Columbia

In a representative democracy, all citizens must be heard. In our nation, citizens must have the ability, through freely elected leaders, to shape the laws under which they must

live. In Washington, D.C., more than half a million Americans live without voting representation in Congress and therefore have no vote on issues that matter the most to them.

As humanists, we work for equal treatment under the law for all human beings. It is not acceptable to us that a part of our population is treated unjustly.

Therefore, we support and pledge to work for the establishment of full voting representation in Congress for the residents of the District of Columbia, with the goal of all Americans having a voice in their legislative future.

Adopted October 2008

The Reform Movement is also promoting Washington D.C. voting rights. This is an issue of civil rights and fairness for all citizens of the United States. U.S. citizens, wherever they live, can ask their federal, elected officials to support D.C. voting rights and give those residents the same rights afforded to U.S. citizens in the rest of the country.

When you support D.C. voting rights as a social justice issue, without supporting any particular piece of legislation or a candidate, you are acting totally in compliance with your 501 (c) (3) status.

*by Marlene Cohen and Deb Godden,
Machar CSHJ, District of Columbia*

Winter 2009

Humanorah

Vol. 31, No. 2

Humanorah is a publication of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, a non-profit organization that mobilizes people to celebrate Jewish identity and culture consistent with a humanistic philosophy of life.

Humanorah is sent to members of the Society for Humanistic Judaism as a benefit of membership. Membership in the Society for Humanistic Judaism is \$85 per year plus local dues where applicable. Membership is tax deductible as provided by law.

President: Lou Altman

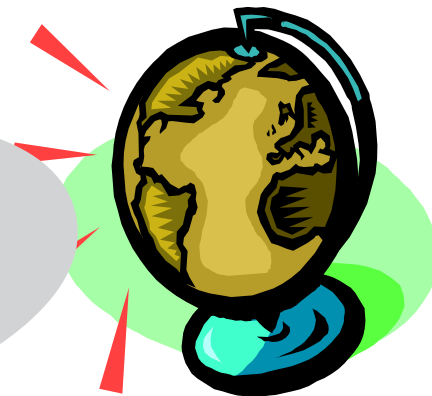
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Address all inquiries about *Humanorah* to the Society for Humanistic Judaism, 28611 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, MI, 48334, 248/478-7610, Fax: 248/478-3159, E-mail: harrietmaza@shj.org or info@shj.org for general questions, Web page: www.shj.org.

Notes From Around the Globe



SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY JUMPS IN ON 2009 THEME OF CHANGE BY ADOPTING A NEW NAME

Changes are afoot in San Diego at the Humanistic Jewish Congregation! The Board leadership has put in 27 hours of meetings over the past six months to formulate plans for the restructuring of our group to focus on the model of a community. Rabbi Miriam Jerris attended the last of these special board sessions over one long weekend in December in order to help bring all the conversations and notes together into a final plan.

Congregation members voted on the restructuring in January and will vote again in April, 2009. After some serious discussion, we agreed to change our name from HJC, San Diego, to the following: *Kahal Am* [Community of People], the Humanistic Jewish Community of San Diego. In addition, we have revised our vision and mission statements to be more consistent with developing a vibrant community. The follow-up work to adjust our name in the public is enormous! The new web address is now in place as www.kahalam.org. This is the year of change and we will be a part of that.

While the Board has been talking, our members have been doing. The popular *Haimish Havurah* has continued to meet on the first Sunday night of the month in members' homes for socializing and *Yiddishkeit*. The host plans the program and provides the refreshments. This has been a well-received program that draws, on average, 18-20 members. Some members are also meeting monthly in the *Beit Midrash* adult class of Jewish history. We use the curriculum written by Rabbi Adam Chalom as a starting point and end up with some interesting discussions. We started out offering the class only

as a benefit to our members, but we hope to eventually open it to nonmembers.

Families came together during *Sukkot* to build a beautiful *sukka* in a local park and to enjoy a picnic lunch. We hung fresh fruit and sang songs of the harvest and Israel. After all the work of getting it assembled, it was a shame to have to pull the structure apart. A Friday night *Shabbat* dinner celebration in the home of one of our *mitsvah* class members also brought a variety of families together for a *Shabbat* dinner celebration. Participants really enjoyed the casual gathering, and at the end of the evening one of the kids was already planning when he could have a similar event in *his* home. We are looking forward to celebrating the *bar* or *bat mitsvah* of each of our four students in the late spring and summer.

Membership recruitment continues to be a challenge in the broad San Diego community. We have instituted bi-monthly *Coffee Talks* in a centrally-located library as a recruitment activity and prepared a prospective membership folder to be given out at any of our events. The *Coffee Talks* are publicized on web calendars, local news releases, and e-vites of contacts. After a brief introduction, we present the taped interview with Rabbi Sherwin Wine, "Community," and follow with discussion. We have developed membership protocols by drawing on the successful experience of other SHJ affiliates. With a move to a location more central to San Diego county and other changes the board is planning for this next year, we expect to see our membership grow.

by Beverly Zarnow, madrikha



MACHAR'S MENTORING PLAN CONTINUES TO DEVELOP

A valuable Board strategic planning session in June led us to focus on how we sometimes lose new members who say that they never felt connected to the congregation. It is particularly hard because our members live in a large radius of DC, MD, and VA. So this summer I created the role of New Member Coordinator. We recruited members willing to be paired with one newcomer family; to talk with them in advance, join them at Machar events they attended, and answer any questions via e-mail or phone.

Many members volunteered; a good maxim is that if you ask even a busy member to do one discrete task for the organization, s/he will usually say "Yes." I was able to match families by both approximate ages and children's ages, or by having no children, as well as by neighborhoods. Some mentors met their new family for a meal in advance of a *Shabbat* service and others just greeted their partner family early at Machar events and sat with them. Children were sometimes able to have a friend in their new Sunday school class before the first day they arrived.

We also ordered Machar reusable grocery bags (made of recycled materials) imprinted with the Machar name, logo, website and the messages "Enlightenment Judaism for a Brighter Tomorrow" and "Working Together for a Brighter Tomorrow." We gave one to each new member family while introducing them to the congregation. The bags were filled with the book *Judaism in a Secular Age*, a Machar member handbook, a welcome letter from the president, apples, honey, a honey dipper, and a Machar notepad. The feedback has been very positive. We hope it will help us keep our new members.

Contact info@machar.org for more information about ordering bags like these (photo by Marlene Cohen).
Marlene Cohen, vice president, Washington, D.C.

**Do you shop online?
You can support the SHJ when you shop
at more than 1,500 online stores.**

**Help us raise funds by
shopping through our
marketplace.**

Remember our new online marketplace — www.fundraising-solutions.org — when you shop online. It is your doorway to **1,500 online stores**. Shop with any of these merchants and they will donate a portion of every sale to us in your name or anonymously. All you have to do is click on the little shopping bag on the SHJ website, and start shopping! You can also put a shopping bag directly on your desktop. **There is no additional cost to you.** Among the stores available to you are Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Dell, GAP, Babies R Us, Toys R Us, Macy's, Staples, Travelocity, and 1-800-Flowers. When you shop online at any of the 1,500+ retailer partners, a portion of your purchasing dollars (anywhere from 2-25%, varying from merchant to merchant) will come back to the Society. Here's how you can help the Society *just by shopping*:

1. Visit the Society for Humanistic Judaism website, www.shj.org.
2. Click on the link on the left side of our homepage that alternately flashes, "Help us raise funds by shopping through our marketplace" and the shopping bag icon that says, "click here for more info."
3. The link takes you to the Fundraising Solutions Welcome page, where you can download a desktop shortcut the next time you shop: **Download Desktop Shortcut**
4. Whether or not you download the shortcut, you're now ready to begin shopping. You can search by merchant or by category and proceed to shop as you normally would online.

By taking the extra step of making your purchases through Fundraising Solutions, you are helping us raise precious dollars that will support SHJ programs and services. Please tell your communities, friends, and families about this unique way to help us raise funds.

KOL HADASH, ILLINOIS RECEIVES EDUCATION GRANT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It was a busy autumn at Kol Hadash in the Chicago area. Our High Holiday services were wonderful, led by our incomparable rabbi, Adam Chalom. His sermons on “Facing Reality” are available on our website: www.kolhadash.com. Our *onegs* were a great success, providing an opportunity for the entire community, including prospective members, to linger and schmooze.

The Sunday School continues to flourish with 70 students representing 40 families in our pre-K through tenth grade school. Kol Hadash was awarded a \$1,000 grant from the Community Foundation for Jewish Education, an agency of Federation, to fund a day-long retreat for school leadership. There are many programs in the community for professional development for teachers and principals but hardly any for lay leaders. Our goals are to clarify our structure and policies, nurture leadership through training, and especially learn tools for moving volunteers into larger leadership roles. This program is a wonderful opportunity for Kol Hadash to solidify and strengthen its school leadership and also to share this experience with the larger Jewish community.

In October, Kol Hadash created and co-sponsored the North Shore Treasure Hunt, a fundraiser that was an astounding success. The weather was perfect for this year’s hunt, which went green (no cars) and was held in an outdoor mall. We walked around the mall and solved entertaining and clever clues. Those who weren’t “puzzle types” monitored clues. It was a fantastic evening, culminating with a pizza dinner and award ceremony. Among our prizes were tickets for a play in Chicago donated by “Broadway in Chicago.”



photo by Dawn Friedman

Kol Hadash Youth Group leads Sukkot craft project.

Our wonderful community service committee continues to facilitate opportunities for us to give back to our extended community. Members volunteer at a local soup kitchen on a regular basis, wrap gifts at Borders and donate the tips to a local residence for the blind and visually impaired, and conduct various collections for families of soldiers, a battered family shelter, the hungry, and other people in need. We have many programs on tap during our cold and frigid winter.

Leora Hatchwell, president, Kol Hadash, Illinois

WINE TASTING, A SPECIAL TREAT AT PACIFIC COMMUNITY

We are all still enveloped in the joy of our *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* celebrations. The latter was enhanced by the playing of cellist Bong Shin Ko. Ko has been with us for many years and also accompanies the choir and the reading of “remembrance” names. She has become a warm friend and always invites us to her recitals.

Among the highlights of our new year has been our special Pacific Community wine and cheese party at the home of Steve and Lynne Koffler. Steve has become a winemaker and he enlightened us on the making of wine and also gave an excellent talk on the different types of wine. This was followed by a very jovial tasting. By the way, Steve’s

own wine is fabulous. What a great way to end a meeting! Felix Kopstein gave an excellent talk on the Jews of Argentina. Both Felix and Lotte (who is an Argentine Jew) were available for questions.

We celebrated *Hanukka* with *latkes* (of course), games and general good spirits at the home of Terry Bayer and Victor Vega. Yes, we do have some very serious meetings in between, but everyone in the Pacific Community loves to eat, chat and spend time together. So we do a lot of that while educating ourselves about what it is to be Jewish, humanistically, of course.

Phyllis Jacobs, SHJ board designee, Pacific Community, CA

NEW JERSEY HUMANIST AWARD PRESENTED BY MORRIS COUNTY CHJ

Our congregation celebrated “Community, Cooperation, and Connection” during our 10th anniversary this fall with a visit connecting us with our SHJ rabbi, Miriam Jerris. She attended a *Shabbat* service at Stephanie and Jeff Zenna’s home, bringing the spirit of SHJ and the Michigan community to us and to Stephanie, who grew up there.

Rabbi Jerris inspired young and older members and reached out to potential new ones as well. In turn, we provided her with examples of our successes and learning, like Michael Littman’s new humanistic version of *Kol Nidre*. Sitting in on classes, Rabbi Jerris experienced our successful Sunday school program. Exchange is key to the success of individual communities as well as SHJ as a whole.

We also connected to part of our community beyond SHJ. We presented our first annual “New Jersey Humanist Award” to college student Arielle Wisotsky, who started the social action “Help Darfur Now” project that has become an international movement with over 250 chapters. As a New Jersey high school student, she took action with a group of friends with a \$1,000 goal. Her organization raised over \$500,000 and made a difference for many in Darfur. Her motto “One person can make a difference” resonated with our own community’s spirit.

Our own spirit of cooperation over the last 10 years led to Rabbi Jerris presenting us with a certificate from SHJ: “Because their founders were so compelled by their experience of Humanistic Judaism in other communities that they recreated that experience for themselves and others; Because CHJMC has developed education and liturgical programs expressing the philosophy of Humanistic Judaism with integrity and excellence; and Because CHJMC epitomizes the values of community, connection, and cooperation,” she read, we had been recognized. Her heartfelt accolades were welcomed by all of our members.

Claire Kerr, president, Morris County, NJ



Arielle Wisotsky holds her award while CHJMC President Claire Kerr, board member Michael Littman and SHJ Rabbi Miriam Jerris look on. photo by Mark Schussel.

TRIANGLE GROWS IN MEMBERSHIP IN DURHAM/CHAPEL HILL

Triangle CHJ, serving the Triangle area of North Carolina, celebrated High Holidays with co-President Alan Metz as *Rosh Hashana* speaker and former President and longtime Treasurer Carol Minton as *Yom Kippur* speaker. Metz spoke of living in Israel; Minton connected the development of Triangle with her own personal life.

We increase in membership yearly. Our High Holiday celebrations, including a *Nizkor* break-the-fast, and then *Hanukka* and *Second Night Seder* attract many nonmembers.

At our annual meeting we voted to contract with an executive director/Sunday school director; Julie Wynmor is getting to know our growing school families and is developing added *mitsvah* projects for our students.

For *Hanukka*, musician Dan Zachary led singing and the Warshauer family presented a new annual puppet show.

Don Rosenbaum, our jazz history member, presented a new program on jazz and Jewish musicians at a Friday night celebration, with his ever-helpful wife Phyllis, who sends our caring community notes.

We have begun an adult education meeting once a month, while students are in classes, with Marv Axelrod moderating as we clarify issues around raising “Jewmanists.” The group has also seen a presentation of a planned Jewish Community Center building that will be affiliated with Federation. Alan Metz continues to represent us at Durham-Chapel Hill Jewish Federation.

Carol Minton heads our *bar/bat mitzvah* class, preparing students to lead family celebrations like our *Tu Bi Shevat seder* where we discuss solutions to our environmental problems.

Our Book Group meets every two months, mainly examining topics around establishing the basis of ethical behavior if we do not attribute morals to a higher authority.

Outgoing longtime President/Co-President Scott Randell received loads of appreciation and a gift to share with his forbearing wife. New co-presidents are Cathy Moore and Alan Metz; Leslie Sheitman, vice president; Brian Sheitman, treasurer; Sue Carson, board secretary; and Steve Young, chairperson of Children’s Education. *Lynne Kane, publicity, North Carolina*

SARASOTA-MANATEE CHJ OBSERVES KRISTALLNACHT WITH LOCAL STUDENTS, CELEBRATES HANUKKA WITH KLEZMER CONCERT

CHJ Sarasota/Manatee observed the 70th anniversary of *Kristallnacht* on November 7 with a special *Kristallnacht* service followed by an inspiring program featuring two teachers and two high school students from the Northport, Florida schools. They described “What Holocaust Education Means to Teachers and Students.” We were greatly moved by the dedication of the teachers who have developed a great course on the Holocaust, and the students who have been inspired by what they have learned.

A standing ovation by 200 members and guests demonstrated our appreciation for the work of both teachers and students. Following that program a number of our members asked how they could help the students in their efforts. The students have founded a Schools-to-Schools club at Northport through which they can help other children in need. One of the ways CHJ can help them is to collect used books that the students send to be sold, with proceeds going toward literacy programs in Uganda. So we followed up the *Kristallnacht* program with a book drive to support the students of Northport High School. It was held on January 10, 2009 (along with our regular



Saturday morning food collection that that week went to Booker High School for needy children and their families). Northport students received from CHJ more than 100 books plus some checks our members contributed in support of the Schools-to-Schools project.

For *Hanukka* we followed our *Shabbat/Hanukka* service with a terrific *Klezmer* concert by our own CHJ member Stan Katz and his *Klezmorim*. It was a members-only party for about 275 people who clapped their hands, tapped their feet and wore grins from ear-to-ear. The program was followed by a delicious *oneg* featuring homemade potato and zucchini *latkes*, made by our hospitality co-chair, Rick Stein.

Sandy Cadman, president. Photo: Jerry Rabinowitz (piano), Gene Sprague (trumpet), Stan Katz (clarinet), Art Siefert (drums). Photo by Jules Altenberg

BETH AMI WELCOMES INSTITUTE SEMINAR. GROWTH IN SIZE

Beth Ami, Colorado Congregation for Humanistic Judaism has recently welcomed 13 new members and hosted many guests who are finding us through word of mouth and online searches. We hope that all who read this article consider referring their friends and relatives in the Denver/Boulder area to bethami.com!

In November, Rabbi Adam Chalom conducted the International Institute “Living the Jewish Year” seminar in Denver to a significant turnout and rave reviews. We explored the origins of all major Jewish holidays, including discrepancies and explanations for the evolution of these events. It was our first time to host the Institute, and we know that this training will enhance the

teaching of holidays in both our Jewish Cultural School and newly-revised adult education program. Rabbi Chalom also spoke to a gathering of students and community members at Colorado University, Boulder. His enthusiastic presentation brought us several inquiries and built awareness of SHJ in this college city.

Hanukka was celebrated as the final session of the JCS for children, and as a potluck lunch and white elephant gift exchange for adults. Social time is a valuable addition to our growing congregation, and digging into *latkes* and other scrumptious dishes, while becoming better acquainted, proved to be a warm, bonding holiday event. *Sheila Malcolm, secretary and madrikha-in-training*

BETH CHAVERIM EMPHATIC ABOUT JUDAISM IN ACTION

Humanistic Judaism frames our outlook on life at Beth Chaverim in Illinois, but it must be demonstrated by action in order to be fully meaningful. This is especially true for children who may not grasp the abstract concepts but can readily understand doing good deeds. To that end, Beth Chaverim has an annual program entitled “Judaism in Action” in which we focus on different *mitzvahs* or good deeds with various supporting programs. In the past, we have featured kindness to animals, feeding the hungry; dignity for the elderly; and dignity for people with disabilities.

This year we made “*NaAseh Shalom, We Shall Make Peace*” our *mitzvah*. *In light of current conditions in Israel and Gaza (which by the time this goes to press will have hopefully reached a peaceful conclusion)*, this *mitzvah* and *value* is all the more timely. The overall goal is to empower each student to make a difference and take action to make peace in his or her family, community, and the world at large.

We began the year by planting seeds of peace in terra cotta pots that each student painted with a peace theme. Our primary class created an illustrated class story that was submitted to the Drawing Peace Contest from the Gandhi



Center at James Madison University (<http://www.jmu.edu/gandhicerter/artcontest.shtml>). The entries should be posted on-line by now. In addition, each school family will receive a copy of the book *Shalom, Salaam, Peace*. We expect to have at least one guest speaker at the school to address multi-cultural and multi-religious differences and ways to respect those differences. This program is supported by a Congregational Enrichment Initiative Program grant from the Community Foundation for Jewish Education from the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. Here is hoping that 2009 does indeed bring that most precious of gifts, *shalom*, to all our communities, and our friends in Israel.

Linda Horn, administrator, Deerfield, IL

Photo: Lexi Strauss and Ariel Seidman engage in Hanukkah cookie-making. Photo by Jodi Hernandez

REMEMBER ! ORANGE COUNTY WELCOMES SNOWBIRDS

The winter months always bring snowbirds to our sunny climate, some of whom are SHJ members. Everyone is welcome to attend our many meetings and special events. A non-member couple who arrived for a Friday *Shabbat*, here, was raving about a humanistic *bar mitzvah* they had attended in Seattle. We welcome news in person.

Our High Holidays, which already seem so far away, were great. We have been revamping all of our holiday services, and they are being well received. *Hanukkah*, also, was a huge success. We had the usual “*latke*” discussion, and as our caterer isn’t able to please us, we opted for potato *kugel* instead; no one even asked where the *latkes* were!

January is a quieter month, but *Purim* and *Pesach* are just around the corner—so we’re revving up. We really never stop: we meet every Friday, during the week, and also on Sundays for our study group and other interest groups. Who said older people should relax? It certainly doesn’t apply to O.C.S.H.J. members!

Sheila Bass, president, Laguna Woods, CA

Got EMAIL?

Send your e-mail address to info@shj.org and begin to receive **member only** updates about Humanistic Judaism, holiday facts, messages from the rabbi, greetings and more.

KAHAL B'RAIRA TOTS HELP CREATE A RECYCLED HANUKKA

Our 2008-09 year was well begun. We congregated often through the High Holidays. It reminded us how powerful are our voices when we take time to pause together in reflection, dedication and song.

We celebrated *Sukkot* both outside and in our “new” Cambridge home (near major highways and public transportation), marked by the chilling winds of autumn. In our observance we connected with our agrarian past and noted that our contemporary dwellings are but temporary shelters. As we erected our *sukka* we reminded ourselves that we each create a home wherever we go.

Next we observed the turning of the seasons with the spin of a dreidel, the twist of a candy cane, and our KB Sunday School furnishing us with a “Recycled *Hanukka*.” Each class produced artwork of recycled materials which they shared with the community (photo above includes kinder-



garten and first graders: Michael Ossam, Audrey Kissin, H Adler, Amar Ruthen, Jessie Lewis, Avi Ruthen, Jeffery Ossam, Talia Pizer, Eli Shear-Baggish, Eliza Kopans and Sophia Kolodney). Happy were the souls who braved wintry winds

and berms of plowed snow, for a great *Hanukka* party.

We turned the calendar’s page with our wonderful Winter Weekend Getaway in the hills of New Hampshire. Annually, KB families, friends and their guests gather and connect in our beautiful New England winter wonderland.

We choose rituals originating in our past and make them our own. Connecting this way enriches our enjoyment. Thank you to all who make it possible.

*Jon Levine, SHJ board designee, Boston, MA
photo by Roger Zimmerman, school co-chair*

WINTER WINDS DO BLOW, BUT DOES BOCA KNOW FROM SNOW?

With the new growth of Congregation Beth Adam, we felt it was important that everyone have an opportunity to meet



and get to know each other. Therefore, we had several social events: BJ and Rick Saul hosted a luncheon at their clubhouse. The adults had a great time eating and talking while the kids had fun in the swimming pool and playing basketball.

As the children’s education sector grew from 11 families to 22, and from 17 children to 34, the school families wanted to get to know each other better. They came together for a barbeque at a local park. With Mike Liss manning the grill, everyone had a fabulous time.

We are looking forward to more social events as *The Funsters*, our new social activities committee, plan more programs.

BJ Saul, president, Boca Raton, FL

Photo: Northerners are reminded the sun is shining somewhere.



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SECULAR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

IISHJ OPENS ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE IN CHICAGO AREA

The International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism is expanding beyond its Michigan campus. Founded in Jerusalem in 1985 as the central educational institution of our movement, the Institute's first office was Rabbi Sherwin Wine's office; its first administrator, Bess Katz, lived in Philadelphia; and its first classroom was a living room. Fifteen years ago, the Institute opened its office in the Pivnick Center for Humanistic Judaism in Farmington Hills, Michigan, from which it organized seminars, stocked a library, held colloquia, and trained leaders, educators, music directors, spokespersons and rabbis. Today the Institute is growing by opening a new campus in North America.

This spring, the Institute will be opening an administrative center for North America in Lincolnshire, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Following the death of IISHJ Dean and Provost Sherwin Wine in 2007, Rabbi Adam Chalom of Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation, then the IISHJ Assistant Dean for North America, assumed new responsibilities, becoming Dean of the Institute for North America. In a symbiotic relationship, the Institute will be sharing office space and staff with Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation. Bringing the dean and the administrative offices under one roof will provide new opportunities for the Institute to grow and expand its programs.

The Institute campus in Michigan will continue to be active. Colloquium 2009 is scheduled for October 2009

in Michigan. The Institute will continue to offer seminars for rabbinic, leadership, and general adult education at the Pivnick Center in Farmington Hills. The Milan Library will continue to provide resources and support for rabbinic and leadership students. And the Institute archives will remain at the Pivnick Center.

Irene Chase, a Kol Hadash member, will be assuming the role of Executive Assistant for Kol Hadash and for the Institute. Irene was educated at the secular North Shore School of Jewish Studies, and has also attended Rabbi Chalom's two-year adult education curriculum in Jewish history, Jewish culture and the philosophy and roots of Secular Humanistic Judaism. Her experience both as an attorney and as a Secular Humanistic Jew will serve the Institute very well.

The Institute extends its gratitude to Linda Glass, who accepted the position of Executive Director 18 months ago and has seen us through a very difficult transition period, and to Lynne Master, President of the IISHJ. Special recognition also goes to Rabbi Miriam Jerris and Bonnie Cousens for their institutional memory and generosity. And, of course, many thanks to the Institute's many supporters and students. Without their participation, the Institute could not continue.

Information about the Institute and its programs is available at its website, www.iishj.org, or by contacting info@iishj.org. New mailing and phone information will be forthcoming shortly.

**Save the Dates! October 23-25, 2009
for the IISHJ COLLOQUIUM 2009
CHALLENGING CONVENTION: SECULAR AND HUMANIST AND JEW**

Building Community

by Rabbi Miriam Jerris

THE TRAVELING RABBI LISTENS, LEARNS, AND SHARES WHAT WORKS IN ONE COMMUNITY WITH ANOTHER

Between May 2008 and April 2009, I will have visited sixteen, yes 16 different communities and congregations. I have just returned from a visit that included time with three communities – our affiliate, Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Sarasota, Florida, and two communities in formation: First Coast Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Jacksonville/St. Augustine, FL and the Humanist Jewish Havurah of Southwest Florida in Naples.

It has been wonderful for me to spend time with so many communities. The very best part has been getting to know the members and leaders of our affiliates. The personal connections are very precious indeed. I thank you all for your warm hospitality; many of you invited me into your homes.

Thank you also for your kindness and support when my father died. It is during difficult times when Humanistic Jews do what they do best. I feel enormous gratitude in being part of this movement.

I have learned many things these past months and had much of what I thought to be true reinforced, things that enhance my ability to help each of you. Although each congregation and community is unique, what I learn from each experience inevitably will help others.

I have learned that:

1. Creating the space and time to talk about your community that my visit requires is helpful in and of itself. Therefore, doing so on a regular basis would increase the effectiveness of your communication and strengthen your organization.

2. Just as I have learned from each of you, you would learn from each other. It would be wonderful if communities in geographical proximity to each other contact one another. Consider including other HJ communities in certain social gatherings or arrange for a regional meeting of leaders. Any increased contact would enhance your ability to serve your own community.

3. My most significant learning has been in discovering what works best for membership recruitment, retention and leadership development. The communities that are recruiting new members and, therefore, growing sponsor regular Intro to Humanistic Judaism sessions. Some of the communities do this program monthly; others at least quarterly. These programs are held in public spaces – libraries have proven to be successful venues. The people who attend the meetings are then contacted within a week and invited to a follow-up coffee in a member's home. The personal contact continues at each level. Buddy programs are formed for new members. New members are interviewed to determine their interests and skills. They are asked personally to make a contribution of time. This process also develops potential leadership.

I know as I continue to travel that the information exchange will continue to be a rich process. I thank you all for contributing.



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From the President, Lou Altman Facing the Questions and Answers

What's the greatest difficulty facing the Society for Humanistic Judaism and the local Humanistic Judaism communities at this particular time?

THE ECONOMY?

Many would say it's the economy, and they would have a good point. But eventually the economy will recover, even though we cannot predict when that will happen.



HERDING KATZES?

Many would say the biggest problem is the reluctance of secular Jews to join organizations dedicated to what they themselves believe in. If they all joined Humanistic Judaism we might be the largest Jewish denomination of all. But for some reason getting these inde-

pendent folks to mobilize is, as Rabbi Adam Chalom says, like "herding Katzes."

Fortunately, many of us do see the sense of forming local congregations and of banding together to form a national organization; and happily, those congregations and that organization have grown steadily over the years.

RABBI WINE?

Some would say the biggest problem is the loss of our charismatic founder, Rabbi Sherwin Wine. But the movement started by Rabbi Wine was built for the future, and (realist that he was) he knew that it was a future that eventually would not include him, but only his intellectual legacy.

So now the generation that stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Rabbi Wine in building the Humanistic Judaism movement is carrying on in his tradition. No one can replace him, but people of intelligence and vision can capably continue what he started and even grow and extend it. But it takes one more ingredient besides intelligence and vision:

IT ALSO TAKES DEDICATION

Yes, dedication. The generation of volunteers that helped Rabbi Wine build the movement is getting older. They have been serving a long time. We need to find dedicated replacements, preferably younger people; we need to train those people to take over some day, and they need to start sharing the load now.

BUT THAT PROCESS HAS BEEN DIFFICULT

It's been difficult because members of congregations are sometimes reluctant to step into leadership roles; and because even leaders of local congregations are sometimes reluctant to help run our North American umbrella organization, the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

No criticism intended here. It's a natural human tendency. You have a lot going on in your own life: earning a living, raising kids, visiting grandchildren, working on hobbies, joining organizations just as important to you as Humanistic Judaism is. I understand all that.

But if nobody steps up, your congregations and your Society will find it difficult to carry on. Not because Sherwin is gone, but because we the living are absent.

VOLUNTEER

Join a committee of your local congregation. Work your way up to the board of directors. Be your congregation's board designee to the Society for Humanistic Judaism. Become president. Be responsible for the future of our movement.

SOMEONE HAS TO DO IT.

Let it be you. You (all of you) are all we've got going for us. There's no one else.

When you do step up, you will find (as I did) that you will get a wonderful feeling of accomplishment.

Where is my strength? In you, my friends.

From the Executive Director, Bonnie Cousens **Humanistic Judaism — A Precious Resource**

These are difficult times for us all, as individuals, as communities, and as an organization. Our day-to-day lives are overshadowed by uncertainty. But we are more fortunate than many. We have a connection that we have come to rely on through the good times we have known. Our comfort is to be found in those around us. A sense of community, the feeling that we are not alone, the belief that others share our views, our fears, and our joys becomes vital as we face new hardships. Our community is both local, surrounding us with the caring and support of friends, and dispersed, providing us with a sense of shared ideas and distant connections. I, like many of you, know this. I accept the caring, the support, the friendships, that come with my connection to our Humanistic Jewish family.

More than thirty years ago, when my family joined the Birmingham Temple, we were looking for a place to educate our children and to celebrate Jewish holidays. We found much more. As we joined committees, took adult ed classes, participated in parents groups, attended retreats and conferences, celebrated life cycles, and lost parents and friends, we realized that we had found much more than we had sought. We became part of a community and forged bonds of friendship that extend far beyond the walls of the Birmingham Temple. For each of us, this sense of belonging, of security, of support can be found in our Humanistic family, in our communities, in the Society. We know we are not alone. Our Humanistic family embraces us and provides the comfort and sustenance we need, especially now when we all face such uncertainty.

Joining our Humanistic family brings many rewards. We become part of a far-reaching family — a family that nurtures and comforts, that celebrates and commiserates, that cheers our successes and provides a shoulder to lean on when we're down, that allows us to speak our mind without fear, that gives voice to our ideas and beliefs. Alone, we struggle; together, we find strength.

Our belief in human responsibility and self-determination is encouraged. We become part of a community that

shares our values — honesty, democracy, justice, peace, tolerance, pluralism, freedom, dignity, and equal treatment for all individuals. We join with others to stand up for what we believe. For the first time we are able to celebrate our Jewish identity with others who share our beliefs.



The SHJ and our Humanistic congregations offer a variety of experiences that enhance our Jewish identity: holiday and life-cycle celebrations; educational programs for us and our children; cultural and social events; family, adult and youth programs; strong, lasting friendships.

Within the SHJ, our celebration of Jewish culture is nurtured. Our understanding of Jewish history is broadened. Our thirst for knowledge is quenched.

But there is so much more that membership brings. There are the intangibles – the often undefined benefits of becoming part of our Humanistic Jewish family – and the more involved we become, the stronger are the friendships we find. Through our shared beliefs, through our shared efforts, we forge bonds that carry us through difficult times. Our very real needs for human companionship, friendship, and succor are met. We share each other's joys and sorrows and we find comfort. Together, we are able to help each other through uncertainty and hardship. As friends, we reach out to support friends in our communities who are struggling. And through the bonds of our friendships, we grow stronger. As we come together in solidarity, we are each better able to face all that the future holds.

As a member of the SHJ, as a member of a community, you know the strength you derive from connection. Membership in the Society is the key. Take advantage of the many doors it unlocks.

HANUKKA PROVIDES A BRIGHT ENDING TO 2008



Boca Raton President BJ Saul lights student-designed hanukkiot. Photo by Irwin Cohn



Machar chefs, led by Rabbi Ben Biber (left), rate the latkes. Photo by Manny Pastreich

WARM HEARTS WELCOME COMMUNITY IN FROM THE COLD

Birmingham Temple members, young and older, pitched in on Christmas day to make the holiday happy and hearty for a community of Detroit neighbors in need of food. Once the situation was brought to our attention by temple member Rudy Simons, volunteers gathered to bag 300 nutritionally healthy lunches, keeping in mind a low sodium diet for the homeless who are often at great risk for heart problems and high blood pressure. The group went to meet, greet, and participate along with their guests at the Central United Methodist Church. Said Dave Kreger, “Evelyn and I (seated below) would be glad to do it again. It was a heartwarming *Christmas Mitzvah Project*; I know the food went to worthy people and it was also nice to be with like-minded people from the temple.”

Once into the 2009 winter season, volunteers were called

upon again, this time to chaperone the annual Youth *Shabbaton*. Adult volunteers need to be hearty for *this* affair, which invites all members’ children, grades four through high school for a sleep-over in the temple family room. Principal Rebecca Smith wonders why it’s called a sleep-over when no one gets to bed before 5:00 a.m. ever! The traditional highlight is the making of *challah* in the temple kitchen at the stroke of midnight.

A recent Friday night found the temple meeting room turned into a *Shabbat* movie café with a buffet table of snacks from mini hotdogs, candy bars, chips and dips to popcorn galore. But the *pièce de résistance* was the movie itself: *Time of Favor*—winner of six Israeli Academy Awards—which keeps the moviegoer on the edge of their seat in what the *New York Times* calls “an arthouse thriller.” *Harriet Maza, Farmington Hills, MI*



photos by Jerry Grodsky

Thank You for Thinking of SHJ

To Elaine Gluckman
In Memory of Hank Gluckman
From SHJ
Bonnie & Mark Cousens
Harriet Maza

To Elissa & David Koppy
In Memory of Anne Marcus
From SHJ
Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To the family of Jim Grossman
In Memory of Jim Grossman
From SHJ
Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Shari & Richard Gelber
In honor of the marriage of Coco & Mitch
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens
Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To Rosalie Gottfried
In Memory of Art Gottfried
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens
Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To Harriet Maza
In memory of Lillian Gilman
From Lorie & Art Behrman
Jane Goldhamer

To Ken Bernard
Congratulations on becoming
president of Yad Ezra
from Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Elaine Fieldman
In memory of her father
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens
Rabbi Miriam Jerris

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To Rabbi Miriam Jerris
In Memory of her father, Hy Muroff
From SHJ

Bonnie & Mark Cousens
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To The Revzin Family
In Memory of Geraldine Revzin
From Jane Goldhamer

To Alison Chalom
In Memory of Hy Muroff
From SHJ
Richard & Shari Gelber
Jerrie Sasson

To Carolyn Borman
In celebration of her 1st grandchild
From SHJ
Bonnie & Mark Cousens
Rabbi Miriam Jerris
Harriet Maza

To Joan Braver
In celebration of a great grandchild
From SHJ
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To Ethel Ellison
In Memory of Phillip Ellison
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To Jack Olshansky
In Memory of Lillian Olshansky
From Lucia Brandon & Bert Steinberg

To Michael & Sue Green
In celebration of their 50th anniversary
and respective birthdays
From Bert Steinberg & Lucia Brandon

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SHJ UPCOMING EVENTS

March 27-29, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO MACHAR, WASHINGTON DC CONGREGATION FOR SECULAR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, Washington, D.C. Contact: Larry Lawrence, larrymlawrence@comcast.net, (202) 364-0702.
April 17-19, 2009	HUJEWS TEEN AND COLLEGE CONCLAVE, MI. Contact: (248) 478-7610, aj@hujews.org.
June 12-14, 2009	RABBI GREG EPSTEIN VISIT TO ORANGE COUNTY SHJ, Laguna Woods, CA. Contact: Sheila Bass, shekaba@aol.com.
September 19-20, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS ROSH HASHANA VISIT TO TRIANGLE CONGREGATION FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, NC. Contact: info@hjnc.org, (919) 967-6788.
September 27-28, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS YOM KIPPUR VISIT TO ADAT CHAVERIM, CONGREGATION FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, Los Angeles, CA. Contact: info@humanisticjudaismla.org, (818) 705-3452.
October 23-25, 2009	COLLOQUIUM '09, "Challenging Convention: Secular & Humanist & Jew," Farmington Hills, MI. Contact: IISHJ, (248) 476-9532, lglass@iishj.org.
November 12-15, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO OR ADAM, CONGREGATION FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, Greater Phoenix, AZ. Contact: info@oradam.org, (480) 663-7788.
November 20-22, 2009	IISHJ SEMINAR, "Whose Judaism Is It? Jewish Inheritance and Modern Judaism," hosted by KAHAL B'RAIRA, Boston, MA. Contact: IISHJ, (847) 777-6907, info@iishj.org.
November 22, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO COLUMBUS, OH PROSPECTIVE COMMUNITY. Contact: SHJ, (248) 478-7610, info@shj.org.
December 11, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS SHABBAT AT THE BIRMINGHAM TEMPLE, MI. Contact: (248) 477-1410, info@birminghamtemple.org.
February 5-7, 2010	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO OR ADAM, CONGREGATION FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, Greater Phoenix, AZ. Contact: info@oradam.org, (480) 663-7788.
February 19-21, 2010	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO OR EMET CONGREGATION, HUMANISTIC JEWS OF MINNESOTA, Twin Cities. Contact: oremet@comcast.net, (651) 699-6302.
March 19-21, 2010	HUJEWS CONCLAVE, Butzel Conference Center, MI. Contact: SHJ, (248) 478-7610, info@shj.org or info@hujews.org.

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