

Humanorah

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



Autumn, 2009

Vol. 32 No. 1

CLOSE TO 500 ATTEND CHJ SARASOTA-MANATEE FUNDRAISING CONCERT

Almost 500 people attended the CHJ Sarasota-Manatee Fundraising Concert by the Humanaires March 15.

The concert, entitled “One People—Many Voices,” took in more than \$4,300 in tickets and scholarships and drew a packed house of a responsive audience, cheering and standing in appreciation at the program’s conclusion.

The audience was comprised of CHJ members, their families and friends, but also many others from the area — both Jewish and non-Jewish — who were drawn by the theme and the growing reputation of the chorus. The presence at the concert of so many who were not Humanistic Jews allowed us to share our Humanistic world view through the Jewish music selected by our conductor, David Berman. A narration wove all of the music together, creating an enlightening as well as entertaining experience for the audience.

The concert, housed at Temple Emanu-El, was the result of the efforts of many people beginning, of course, with David Berman who

planned the program, wrote program notes and narration, and conducted our chorus with his usual joy and enthusiasm. He was supported by all members of the chorus and a number of other CHJ members

who sold tickets, encouraged friends to be sponsors, took care of getting the extensive program notes printed, read the narration, handled the ticket table at the concert, ushered, filmed, did publicity and other concert-related tasks.

The entire 31-person chorus performed, including soloists Tatev Baroyan, Alice Berman, Naomi Linkous, Marty Lipton, Sandy Siegel, assistant conductor and soloist Joe Spinella, and our pianist Zara Baroyan. Indeed, it was a rousing success.

The fine results of our Humanaires concert provides an excellent example of the hard work of so many people who make CHJ possible.



photo by Jules Altberg

During 2008-9, a total of 148 of our 315 members (47% of our membership) actively participated in doing the work of our congregation. We are very proud of all of them. This number does not include all of those who benefited from our many social groups (e.g. Film, Wine Tasting, Dining, Bridge, Women’s, Men’s, Mah Jongg and more), or events such as *Shabbat* dinners or Jewish Education series, or other activities at CHJ.

The 148 active members who made our programs and activities possible were recognized and thanked at our annual meeting, May 3. Their names are entered on a scroll that will be on view this year during the *onegs* following our services.

Sandy Cadman, president, Sarasota

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We’re listed in your CFC brochure and online. Search for the **Society for Humanistic Judaism**.

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Questions, contact Bonnie Cousens at 248-478-7610 or bonniecousens@shj.org.

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CANADA

ORAYNU, TORONTO, ON

FROM THE PRESIDENT, LOU ALTMAN THIS IS NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S JUDAISM



the culmination of the Jewish Enlightenment?

The idea of only one god was the first step; at least it simplified the superstition. Then, the tying of religion to ethics and equal treatment was an even bigger step, especially when Jewish people realized that this principle applies to non-Jews as well. Reform Judaism was another breakthrough; it freed many Jews from religious tyranny over how we conduct our everyday lives. But Reform still toes the official line of supernatural authority, even as Jewish people from the 19th century onward flourished in careers that depended on empirical and scientific reasoning but continued to pray on *Shabbat*.

It was not until Humanistic Judaism came along that we had Jewish congregations that officially recognized the primacy of the natural world and put supernatural fantasy behind us.

Do you know that you are in the midst of the most important advance in the history of the Jewish people; the final chapter in our relentless march toward rationality; the

We cannot claim a new way of being Jewish, because there have always been skeptics among us. But they were either solitary or they formed groups whose aims were more political or ideological and not primarily devoted to celebrating Judaism as such.

Humanistic Judaism is a step beyond that: a new way of coming together in congregations to celebrate our cultural and family heritage, to celebrate it out loud and together, using our common belief in rationality as the organizing principle of a Jewish congregation.

There are plenty of Jewish congregations, but most of them are locked in to the supernatural. There are plenty of humanist, atheist, or agnostic organizations, but most of them are not concerned with Judaism.

Humanistic Judaism is unique, it's different, it's special. I am glad to have each and every one of you with me on this great adventure we call Humanistic Judaism.

Shana tova,

Louis Altman, president,
Society for Humanistic Judaism

Autumn 2009

Humanorah

Vol. 32, No. 1

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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Notes From Around the Globe



ORAYNU CONGREGATION CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY WITH FUNDRAISER AND SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM RABBI DESIGNATE

Oraynu members and friends gathered on June 14 to celebrate a special milestone since their founding in 1969 as the Secular Jewish Association. Jerry Bain, an original member, spoke on the group's roots and founding purpose, and Bruce Cole presented a video of photos, past and present. Rabbi Designate Karen Levy talked about what Oraynu Congregation stands for today:

“It is ironic that Secular Humanistic Judaism is the smallest movement in the Jewish world today. Yet, our ethical principles — secularism, equality, democracy, freedom, rationalism, creativity and social responsibility — have had as great an impact in the Jewish world as any other set of Jewish ideas in the last 300 years. ... The biggest mistake of the secular humanist community at large is to call ourselves non-believers. We are not non-believers. We have very strong convictions at the very core of our being. For the last 20 years, Oraynu has taken a page from our founders — to speak clearly, publicly, fearlessly about our beliefs.

Our families' roots lie in many lands across the face of the earth. We are socialists and capitalists, and every-

thing in between. We have Jewish and non-Jewish members. We are Diaspora nationalists, Zionists and universalists; Yiddishists, Hebraists, and Anglophiles who ‘do Judaism’ only in English. Let us gain strength in sharing what unites us and enjoy and learn from our differences. May we always be a community where each adult and child will feel welcome; where each one of us can feel safe to explore Judaism and the world from a secular perspective; where we will celebrate the rhythms of the Jewish year and our own life passages together, according to our beliefs, and join together in the humanistic Jewish imperative to mend the world.”

The event also served as a fundraiser with members and friends donating \$5,000 in tribute to Oraynu. November 14 will mark the next gala, celebrating Karen Levy's ordination and her installation as Oraynu's rabbi. There will be a tribute program created in her honour.

by Sandi Horwitz, Toronto.

Visible from left: Paul Isaacs, Eva Goldfinger, Paula Bass, Michelle Wolfson, Roby Sadler, Karen Levy, Jim Sadler, Pam Paris. Photo by Bruce Cole.





HOW'S THIS FOR A VISION STATEMENT?

The executive board of Beth Ami, Colorado Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, developed this vision statement to guide the future growth of their community. The drawing will be converted into a large vinyl poster to display at all events.

Ed Hyatt, a graphic recorder with Alchemy: The Art of Transforming Business, in Denver, did the drawing. For more information, please contact Lenore Kingston, Jewish Cultural School director, at golden.paws@hotmail.com.

NORTH CAROLINA CONGREGATION CHANGES ITS NAME

As secular and humanistic groups around the country gain more visibility, NC's Triangle Congregation for Humanistic Judaism develops a stronger voice every year. Founded in 2001, our congregation of more than 50 families is now known as Kol Haskalah: A Humanistic Congregation. Kol Haskalah means "Voice of Enlightenment," referring to both the humanistic tradition of open-mindedness and the Jewish Enlightenment of the 19th century. Rabbi Sherwin Wine described the Enlightenment as the genesis for Humanistic Judaism, so our new name pays special tribute to him as well.

Building upon our hiring of Julie Wynmor as education and administrative director, we established committees to support the Board and enhanced our curriculum for teacher training and child development. We changed our fiscal year to correspond to the school year and substantially revised our by-laws to assist in organizational changes. Board member Allison Wood developed and launched a new website at www.kolhaskalah.org.

Our Jewish holiday celebrations are followed by potluck

dinners and often include entertaining puppet shows by the Warshauer family and participation by Sunday School classes. These lively events are regularly attended by members and the wider community. Sunday morning sing-alongs and discussion groups blend our older and younger members in engaging activities. Our families enjoy a vibrant Sunday school program leading to *b'nai mitzvah* for teens like Sarah Nydick, who recently led a *Shabbat* program about Darfur. Other programs this spring were on "Ethics without God" and "Green Energy." Our book club continues to meet regularly.

We are active members of the Jewish Federation and join with area Jewish congregations to cook and serve monthly meals at a shelter as well as other social action projects. Our many intercultural families add unique perspectives and find our community a welcoming one. We look forward to welcoming Rabbi Miriam Jerris for our *Rosh Hashana* services this year and anticipate another exciting year of growth that began with our Sunday School Open House on August 30.

Lynne Kane, publicity, Raleigh-Durham

KAHAL B'RAIRA ROLLS WITH THE WEATHER, AND ENJOYS EACH OTHER'S COMPANY



For those of you old enough to remember, our spring 2009 was one characterized by overcast days and rain, with temperatures below normal. So, come summer, would a little bit of precipitation and fog scare intrepid KB beach mavens off of the beach?? Of course not.

Come July, we turned out in fine form to ride the rolling surf, wiggle our toes in the sand, and “Ess, Bubeleh, ess!” Bernie and Butch Lofchie’s beach house was again the locale for our summer beach rendezvous.

We like to keep KB casual, yet we have our carefully choreographed rituals and observances. We have spent a great deal of thought and energy developing our schedule. We try

to squeeze in everything we can into a Sunday morning. Even the schmoozers have a scheduled time.

We have other types of gatherings we call “Beyond Sunday Morning.” Our winter week-end getaway, *Shabbat* evenings and Saturday night potluck get-togethers are other occasions like our summer beach rendezvous, where we make a moment to relax together, informally.

Although some of us are shy people, these are the events where it’s easy to strike up a conversation with someone you don’t know and whom you’d never get to know otherwise.

It is at these events that the spouses who never come to regular meetings, show up and are greeted. Add our kids to the mix and we are ready to let the good times roll.

Our community is strengthened at these times. How could a little weather scare us away?

Jon Levine, SHJ board designee, Boston, MA

photo by Zava Basile: Patti Barros, Cara Swiderman enjoy themselves.

KOL HADASH, ILLINOIS MARKS 8TH ANNIVERSARY AS IT CONTINUES ITS GROWING

Kol Hadash, Illinois, celebrated its eighth birthday this spring. Like other eight-year-olds, it is busy and growing.

In May, more than 70 members gathered for a progressive dinner: starting at one house for appetizers, at others for a delicious meal and then back together again for dessert.

Also in May, Sasha Bartolf, legislative director for the Secular Coalition for America, visited and talked about the issues she has been working on such as faith-based initiatives, proselytism in the military, and abstinence-based sex education.

Rabbi Adam Chalom offered ses-

sions on President Obama’s first 100 days, the American Jewish experience, the New Testament, and evolution and intelligent design.

But learning wasn’t only for adults. The Kol Hadash Sunday school grew too! We celebrated nine *bar* and *bat mitsvahs* this year and our Hebrew School was so full, we had to create a second session. In May, we confirmed our eighth graduating class,



including Jordyn Fishman, Lisa Friedlander, Steven Jacobs.

Our Community Service Committee reached out to prepare and serve meals at a local soup kitchen. Our youth group went to Ronald McDonald House to help out, and our *mitsvah* students used their celebrations to help others also.

As we look ahead, we see plenty to celebrate, beginning with High Holiday services, wonderful words from our rabbi and beautiful music from our choir.

David Hirsch, Highland Park, IL Photo: School director Dawn Friedman, teacher David Hirsch, and Rabbi Adam Chalom stand proudly with confirmation class.

photo by PeterSills

RABBI QUESTIONS SHJ TAKING STAND ON DC VOTING RIGHTS

April 13, 2009

To the Board of Directors of the SHJ and the Editors of *Humanorah*:

Once again, the Society for Humanistic Judaism has exceeded its proper role and authority in issuing an official pronouncement with regard to a political matter—in this instance, supporting federal voting rights for residents of Washington, D.C. (as reported in the Winter 2009 issue of *Humanorah*). The merits of the matter are not at issue; the propriety of the organization's deciding and advocating on this or any political matter on behalf of its membership is the issue.

Not only did the SHJ fail to consult its individual members prior to making its decision on their behalf; not only is the SHJ without expertise beyond that of its individual members in coming to its decision; but there is in the philosophy of Humanistic Judaism, which it purports to espouse, and in the philosophy of the SHJ, nothing that requires members of the SHJ to take a position on the issue, let alone specifying what that position must be and advertising it publicly.

Each of us, as thinking and responsible beings, is capable of deciding political and ethical issues for ourselves and whether or not we wish our views to be publicly advertised. The SHJ may not properly usurp that responsibility. It is ironic that the SHJ has violated the rights of its own members in its effort to serve the cause of justice.

I hereby request that the SHJ withdraw its resolution; that it cease activities in support of the resolution; and that it refrain, in the future, from issuing statements on political issues. I further request that this letter be published, in its entirety, in the next issue of *Humanorah*.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Daniel Friedman, Lincolnshire, Illinois

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SHJ PRESIDENT RESPONDS

May 6, 2009

Dear Dan,

I presided over a meeting of the board of directors of the Society for Humanistic Judaism during the last weekend of April 2009 and at that meeting your letter of April 13 regarding the Society's District of Columbia voting rights resolution was distributed to the board and read aloud by me.

I made it clear to the directors that the issue that concerned you was not the merits of the voting rights question itself, but "the propriety of the organization's deciding and advocating on this or any political matter on behalf of its membership." The ensuing discussion made it very clear that the board understood your concern in exactly those terms.

In response to your request to publish your letter in the *Humanorah*, a majority of the board voted to do so along with this reply. However a majority of the board also voted not to rescind the resolution in question. During the discussion that preceded these votes, the majority made the point that the resolution had previously been circulated to the governing bodies of the constituent congregations and through them to individual members for input and approval, before being adopted by the board of the Society, as is the Society's policy on issues not subject to time constraints.

The board understood your philosophical stance that an organization should not take political positions on behalf of its members, but they respectfully disagreed with that principle. They took pains to express their personal regard for you, but could not agree philosophically on this issue. Rather, the board took the position that the voices of the members of a congregation can be adequately represented by a majority of the congregation's governing body, and that the voices of the congregations can be adequately represented by a majority of the governing body of their umbrella organization, the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

Notwithstanding this disagreement over principle, I thank you personally and on behalf of the Society for taking the trouble to make your views known to the board.

Sincerely,



Lou Altman, President, Society for Humanistic Judaism



HARVARD RABBI COMES TO ORANGE COUNTY

Although we don't have regular meetings in the summer, thanks to the Society for Humanistic Judaism, we started the "off season" with a weekend visit from Rabbi Greg Epstein, the Humanist Rabbi at Harvard University.

We held our installation of officers, and Rabbi Epstein addressed our members at a *Shabbat* dinner. On Saturday, we presented an all-day symposium, and the "Harvard Rabbi" drew nonmembers from the Laguna Woods Village community [Membership results unknown at press time.] We followed up with a coffee and conversation with Rabbi Epstein on Sunday.

WASHINGTON, D.C. GROUP INFORMED ON ISSUES

We feel so fortunate to have Macharniks actively involved in jobs that make a difference in policy directions for the country. On May 29, we enjoyed a lively presentation of President Obama's plans in areas where the following members have expertise: Kathy Hudson, science issues; Joyce Rosenthal, health issues; Marc Mauer, criminal justice; Nadine Wettstein, immigration; Norman Gleichman, labor; and Jocelyn Samuels, civil rights. Most reported that the President was listening to knowledgeable advisors and refocusing some departments to be more responsive to the needs of average Americans.

One fun ritual we have developed is the end-of-the-school year annual group photo. We can record the growth of our little ones and also

So what did we learn from Rabbi Epstein? We learned that we each have a voice in our concept of Humanistic Judaism. Although we have no dogma to proselytize, Rabbi Epstein encouraged us to spread the word that our Humanistic Judaism chapter is a place to come and feel comfortable with our Judaism. Our strength is that we feel like family.

In order to fill the rest of the summer gap and keep in touch, we had a summer dinner and showed *The Dead Sea Scrolls*. Then our annual film festival began and ran through July and August. Our out-and-about special interest group kept busy in August, viewing outstanding and meaningful stained glass windows at a local synagogue, listening to Klezmer music at the Oceanside Museum of Art, and attending a Jewish Music Festival. We ended our summer activities with a BBQ dinner and then readied ourselves for membership functions and the high holidays.

Every once in a while a humanist from out of the area passes through. Please don't hesitate to call and let us know you're in our area. We have a meeting every Friday night during the season. **Judy Mandel, president, Laguna Woods, CA.**

The above photo, by Lou Behrman, shows Sheila Bass, past president who retired after eight years with Rabbi Greg Epstein and Judy Mandel (right), the newly installed president. [Judy is an energetic lady who brings years of business and volunteer experience to her new position.]



the increase in membership. This photo, by Marlene Cohen, was taken on the front steps of the Jewish Primary Day School of Washington, D.C., our landlords for Sunday morning Jewish Cultural School and Adult Education programs.

Marlene Cohen, SHJ board designee, Machar Congregation.

MARCIA, JOE GROSSMAN CHOSEN FOR 2009 ROY CALDER SERVICE AWARD

On February 20, 2009, members of Kol Hadash, Northern California Community for Humanistic Judaism, proudly named Marcia and Joe Grossman the 2009 recipients of the annual Roy Calder Service Award. Despite declining health, Calder, founder of the community and a close friend and role model for the Grossmans, was in attendance for the service and presentation. He passed away ten days later at the age of 88. The couple felt honored to have had Mr. Calder in attendance.

Speaking for Kol Hadash community and for the Society for Humanistic Judaism, Rabbi Miriam Jerris delivered the award and the message. She talked about Marcia and Joe's vision for Humanistic Judaism in the Bay area and their dedication of a decade to fulfilling that vision, "working competently and tirelessly on behalf of Kol Hadash." Just as Roy Calder had been their role model, Marcia and Joe Grossman, too, had become role models" she said, "models of volunteer leadership for Kol Hadash and the Society for Humanistic Judaism."

"We joined Kol Hadash in 1999," said Marcia, "the year after we moved to the San Francisco Bay area. The group had been founded by Roy approximately 10 years earlier. I came onto



the board of directors as vice president the second year we were members. Then I became president and held that position for five years." Joe came on as vice president in Marcia's last two years in office and then he became president.

"Roy was a valuable asset," said Joe. Calder helped them make changes even when the changes went against Calder's own initial founder's view. He wanted what was best for the community, said Joe. Both were deeply appreciative of receiving the award in their friend's name. [Check the Kol Hadash, Northern California website for more information.]

SCA REPORTS SUCCESS IN FIGHTING RELIGIOUS RIGHT

The Secular Coalition for America (SCA), of which SHJ is a member, remains vigilant in its work to protect our rights from the encroachment of religious beliefs. Sean Faircloth, new executive director of the SCA, reports that, so far in 2009, the SCA has successfully encouraged lawmakers to refuse to give in to the Religious Right's policy demands on the following issues:

- ◆ Funding faith-based organizations in the stimulus package
- ◆ Forcing taxpayers to pay for the religious education of D.C. students
- ◆ The continuation of the global gag rule that suppresses the provision of critical medical information to patients,
- ◆ Funding abstinence-only until-marriage programs and
- ◆ The creation of an annual "Spiritual Heritage Week."

Additionally, he reports, that in May, SCA had its first individual meeting with White House officials, at which time SCA

members "increased the visibility and improved the perception of nontheists in America." Since then, they have been invited back four times and reported by *The Nation* magazine as "assertive and credible."

Now, in their own home on K Street (Washington, D.C.), they will advocate, this fall, that "Congress strike language in any and all bills that would allow faith-based organization to use federal funds to proselytize and discriminate based on religion."

You can support SCA's efforts with your contribution. Send your check payable to the Secular Coalition for America to the SHJ. We will forward your donation to SCA, and you will feel good about helping to protect our First Amendment Rights.

CHJ MORRIS COUNTY, SMALL IN SIZE, BIG IN COMMITMENT

People make a difference. In our congregation, CHJMC, many people contribute beyond merely attending events. From organizing the events to teaching our younger members, our small congregation relies on everyone.

Last season's events included Sarah Bartoff, representing the Secular Coalition of America, discussing current lobbying issues; Dan Barker's practical, musical approach to ethics and rights; our *b'nai mitzvah* students, meeting Dan Barker, author of a book they had read; and our book club discussing excerpts from *God Is Not Great* by Christopher Hitchens. Other sessions included a spirited debate on the connections between intelligence and genetics, as part of the Darwin celebrations, and a sonic walk through the history of popular music identifying Jewish influences including artists, composers, lyricists, and even agents.

Our social action projects reached out to our community in ways that we felt echoed the times. We collected women's suits for a local organization, Dress for Success Morris County, which helps women entering the job market. Our Sunday School students convinced their parent to donate in exchange for extra chores, collecting enough money to pay for books and CDs for a first grade class through the "Donors Choose" organization. We also had a unique opportunity to help a local community in need. Rob Agree, one of our members, is a principal at a Charter School in a nearby under privileged community. The stark need for basic food by the families attending this school led our community to shop and donate hundreds of dollars worth of food and supplies.

Coming together to share in our community keeps our congregation vital and fun. I look forward to many more events and heartfelt discussions in the season ahead.

Claire Kerr, president, Morris County, NJ

AT BETH ADAM DISCUSSIONS BRING MEMBERS CLOSER

Discussion *Oneg Shabbats*, once a month for members only, have proved successful. Members enjoy getting together in small groups in members' homes for delicious desserts and lively discussions. The topics and facilitator are decided in advance and advertised so that those attending are prepared for the discussion. One of the most lively discussions was on Rabbi Wine's statement "Believing is Better than Not Believing," found in the book *Understanding Humanistic Judaism, an Orientation for New Members*, compiled by Rabbi Miriam Jerris and SHJ Executive Director Bonnie Cousens. Other topics included "Superstitions" in October; "Dr. Seuss on the Loose," an adult perspective; "Famous Jewish Women" at Purim time; and Humanistic Judaism. This is a great way for members to really get to know one another.

During the summer we sent out letters inviting people who have shown an interest in Humanistic Judaism and our congregation to our High Holiday service with hopes of increasing our membership.

BJSaul, president, Boca Raton, FL

SHJ SUPPORTS RIGHT TO CHOOSE IN HEALTH CARE BILL

The SHJ has joined other members of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in a letter to Congress urging that current levels of access to abortion be maintained in health care reform. With conservatives attempting to limit women's right to choose, it is important to speak up. The letter says, in part, "we are opposed to attempts — many made in the name of religion and morality — to exclude abortion services from health care reform ... we call on Congress to preserve the current standard of reproductive health care and ensure that millions of uninsured and underinsured women will have access to these services.

Your Generosity Makes a Difference.

Your gift to the SHJ can ensure the future of Humanistic Judaism.



- Contact me about the Pooled Income Fund or a planned gift.
- I am enclosing a tax deductible donation to the SHJ:
 - \$136
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CONGRATULATIONS!

TO THE PRESIDENTS & LEADERS

OF OUR AFFILIATED COMMUNITIES:

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Oregon	Roberta Hellman , Kol Shalom, CHJ
Washington	Secular Jewish Circle
Canada	David Morrison , Oraynu

BROTHERS REMEMBER THEIR SISTER WITH A GIFT TO SHJ

David Redding of Walnut Creek, California, and his brother, Bernard Resnick, of Malibu, California have generously presented SHJ with a gift of \$15,000 as a memorial to their sister, Ethel R. Bennett. Their gift will be used to create and endow the Ethel R. Bennett Memorial Youth Scholarship, enabling teens and college students to participate in the annual HuJews Youth Conclave for many years to come.

Said SHJ Executive Director Bonnie Cousens to the brothers, "Your vision will help us instill in future generations a commitment to celebrating Humanistic Judaism. Each year we will encourage our youth to apply for the Ethel R. Bennett Memorial Youth Scholarship, which will cover the fees for our HuJews Conclave. The award will be based on a demonstrated commitment to Humanistic Judaism and will encourage those who might otherwise not apply, to do so. We are most grateful." Jake MacDonald, high school son of Carrie and Steven of the Birmingham Temple is the first recipient.

**CONGRATULATIONS
ORAYNU CONGREGATION
ON YOUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY**

SHJ SELECTS MONTH OF HESHVAN FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

SHJ has joined other Jewish organizations in declaring the Hebrew month of Heshvan (October 19-November 17, 2009) as Jewish Social Action Month. Designating their program as a month of *Tikkun Olam*, it has asked each of its affiliated communities to select their own service projects. The month of Heshvan has been chosen in the belief that, coming right after the High Holidays, levels of Jewish consciousness and community involvement will be at their zenith.

Once again, Humanistic Jewish children and adults are being asked to participate in a Jewish expression of *tsedaka*. This is the fifth year the Society has designated a month of *Tikkun Olam* and the third time it has joined the greater Jewish community in a month of community service. "All humanitarian projects," said SHJ Executive Director Bonnie Cousens, "should be considered, whether within the parameters of the Jewish world or outside of that framework. Our expression of our Judaism is through our seeking to make the world a better place."

The Society will provide a list of possible projects as an aid to communities. It will collect data and issue press releases expressing SHJ's ethical commitments to all the peoples of the world and its connection with other humanitarian Jewish organizations. Communities are asked to inform the Society about their projects so ideas can be shared. While many communities include community service and social action as an active part of their ongoing program, this coordinated campaign will help to increase the connection between communities and to create an experience of being part of something larger than our individual communities.

The community service project can be posted on the Jewish Social Action Month website <http://globaljsam.ning.com/>, which contain ideas for community service projects and promotes social action month as "Building Unity through Positive Action." In this way we, we not only connect to the larger Humanistic Jewish community, but also to the larger Jewish community.

Building Community

TRANSFORMING HIGH HOLIDAY GUESTS INTO MEMBERS: DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY BY RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS

There are times during the year that offer good opportunities for membership growth: the fall festivals and *Passover*. At these times, Jews emerge from their mostly secular selves and seek ways to connect with other Jews. Because we also tend toward reflection, unaffiliated Jews will seek a Jewish option that is consistent with their world view. Communities who publicize their events will receive visitors for *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*.

When it comes to providing meaningful, relevant and inspirational celebrations and commemorations, our communities excel. Thus, we have an exceptional opportunity to both inspire our visitors and then transform them into members. Although there are some visitors looking only for a single event, if the right experience is created and the right follow-up provided, they may also become members. Infrastructure, then, is needed for this to become a reality:

1. Procure full contact information from your visitors. The best way to do that is during the reservation process. However, if you have “drop-ins,” then acquire this information when they arrive.
2. Have more than one person at your “greeting” table. Be persistent about getting the information without becoming intrusive or obnoxious. In other words, your greeters need to be good *schmoozers*.
3. Create guest name tags so everyone knows who the new people are. Use name tags for all members so that guests know who they are speaking to and can refer to the person’s name throughout the conversation.
4. Have additional board members serving as hosts or ushers throughout the room. If people arrive early, hosts need to initiate introductions, asking guests about themselves and making them feel welcome. When I am visiting a community for these major events, I “work” the room, introducing myself to everyone I do not know.
5. Ask guests to raise their hands and welcome them to the community. Ask your “hosts” to stand so that guests will know who they are.
6. Assign additional hosts or emissaries to make everyone feel welcome at the *oneg* or reception after the program. The universal complaint of most

visitors or prospects is that no one approached them or spoke to them. It’s so tempting to spend time with friends, some you may not have seen all summer or for a year. However, if we are in a



leadership role, we simply must set aside our personal desires and make newcomers feel welcomed. Draw them into a conversation with a number of individuals.

7. Follow-up, first, with a letter thanking them for attending the program and inviting them to an Introduction to Humanistic Judaism program. This should happen within the month following the holidays. Send the letter the week following *Yom Kippur*. Call them the week following the letter. Tell them how glad you are that they attended the holiday event and invite them to the “intro” program again. Offer to meet them there. Include also a calendar of events for upcoming community programs.
8. Keep them on your mailing list for six months to a year, following up monthly with phone calls unless they ask you not to call them.

The warmth and personal contact will appeal to many people who will respond in a positive way and begin to attend events. Continue fostering the personal connection during each visit and in follow-up. Prospects need to be nurtured. Gain the reputation of being a place that is welcoming, warm and inviting. If Humanistic Judaism is not about warm, personal contact, I don’t know what is. It is inherent in our core values. Energize yourself to become a dynamic ambassador for Humanistic Judaism and your community. *Shana Tova Um’tuka*. A good and sweet (and healthy) New Year!

Support the Fund for Humanistic Judaism

Building Communities Training Leaders Developing Resources

Community Development

The Sherwin T. Wine Group Development Fund helps nurture and develop Humanistic Jewish communities and leadership. This fund enables humanistic rabbis and other leaders to visit established and developing communities; energize, strengthen, and guide them; and increase the visibility and outreach capabilities of the communities and the Movement. The Miriam Jerris Community Development Fund supports communities in promoting weekend events.

HuJews: Teen & Young Adult Programs

The Society for Humanistic Judaism HuJews Teen and Young Adult Conclaves help establish bonds among our youth and reinforce both their Jewish identity and their connection with Humanistic Judaism. Young adult programs at Society conferences and humanistic *havurot* on university campuses provide a forum for discussion and the sharing of ideas among college students at a time when they are self-identifying, inquiring, and most receptive to new ideas and information. Our HuJews website enables young people to create an online connection with Humanistic Judaism and find the resources they need to celebrate Humanistic Judaism when they leave home for college.

Publications & Resources

Society publications provide a ready reference and resource for individuals, families, and communities to create meaningful holiday and life-cycle observances as well as educational programs for adults and young people. *The Guide to Humanistic Judaism*, for example, offers an overview to our philosophy. The topical and timely journal, *Humanistic Judaism*, features issue-oriented articles and regular departments such as book reviews, travel, and regional events. Society Holiday Kits bring Humanistic Jewish holiday celebrations into

homes, dorm rooms, and beyond. Videos and DVDs provide programs on Humanistic Judaism in your home and community.

Curricula and Training

The Society sponsors training programs and provides resources for youth and adult education. Membership orientation, three-year adult study groups, adult *bar/bat mitzvas* and confirmations, and manuals on history, culture, music, holidays, and life cycles allow members to learn about Humanistic Judaism and connect to our heritage. Visits to communities provide opportunities for onsite workshops and training.

Rabbinic and Leadership Training

The International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism is the academic arm of the Movement. The Rabbinic Program prepares men and women to become the spiritual leaders and mentors of Secular Humanistic communities. Similarly, the leadership, educators', and music programs train individuals to serve the ceremonial, philosophic, and educational needs of our communities. The masters degree program builds on the knowledge base of the above programs and provides an advanced course of Jewish study relevant to the movement. Gifts to the Society's Scholarship Fund allow future Jewish leaders to focus on their seminary studies without the distractions imposed by financial need.

Seminars, Conferences, and Colloquia

The Society sponsors national and regional conferences and seminars that enhance the emotional and intellectual lives of Humanistic Jews across North America. These events bring nationally and internationally renowned scholars, lecturers, and teachers to Society communities and congregations. They include adult education and organizational and teacher training workshops.

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as your search engine. Type in "Humanistic Judaism" as your charity and our name will appear. Then search the Web for your needs. And know that this time you will earn money for SHJ while you search!

From the Executive Director, Bonnie Cousens **Humanistic Judaism — A New Year, A New Beginning**

Shana tova — a new year has begun — it is a time to remember, a time for reflection, a time for resolve. Our roots provide the path to follow if we are to build a strong and lasting Humanistic Judaism.

Forty-six years ago, Sherwin Wine created Humanistic Judaism at the Birmingham Temple. His vision for Humanistic Judaism encompassed a movement of interdependent organizations that would benefit each other. Forty years ago, he, along with members of the three communities, founded the Society to create a voice for Humanistic Judaism in the Jewish world and to provide connections for Humanistic Jews — communities for our children when they leave home and for us as we move or age. And the Society, along with leaders in the movement, helped Sherwin to create the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism to train rabbis, leaders and educators for Humanistic communities.

Sherwin's vision encompassed a human-centered philosophy built on the celebration of Jewish culture and the promotion of humanistic values of dignity, equality, ethical behavior, and individual and collective responsibility. He knew that creating a movement would require integrity, energy, commitment, and funding. He knew that each of us would have to fulfill the obligations of membership if we wanted our movement to thrive and grow.

He envisioned celebrating cultural Judaism in a new venue, a congregational structure that provided warm, welcoming communities for many who had never found a home in theistic congregations. Humanistic Jews would say what we believe and believe what we say. There would be no prayers, no reliance on a supernatural being for action, comfort, or relief.

Sherwin insisted that we face reality with our eyes wide-open. He taught us that we live in "a crazy world." We cannot ex-

pect fairness or justice in our lives. Death is real and not always welcome. Reason, not faith, enables us to determine truth. Conclusions flow from our use of the scientific method. It's OK to say "I don't know," but it's *not* OK to do nothing, waiting for others to provide what we need and want. It's *not* OK to wait for others to support our movement.



If we are Humanistic Jews, we have a responsibility to sustain and strengthen our movement. As committed members, we are obligated to become involved and provide the energy and financial support to strengthen our community and the SHJ. As communities we are obligated to be involved and financially supportive of the Society. And the Society is obligated to provide resources and a voice to our affiliates and members and support to the institution that trains our rabbis, leaders and educators. Only then can we fulfill our founder's vision and carry out his teachings.

The Talmud relates a story told by Yochanan ben Zakkai: Honi once encountered a man planting a carob tree. "How long will it take to bear fruit?" Honi enquired. "About seventy years," the man replied. "Do you think you will live long enough to taste its fruits?" The man explained, "I have found ready-grown carob trees in the world. As my forefathers planted them for me, so I plant for my children." This is our responsibility; to plant for the future; it is our debt to Sherwin and our founders, it is our obligation to our successors. Join me in our quest to fulfill Sherwin's vision, to create a movement that will endure beyond each of us.

Ensure a Vibrant Humanistic Judaism for Years to Come with a Planned Gift or IRA Distribution

Humanistic Judaism is built on Jewish traditions: culture, values, holiday and life-cycle celebrations, community, and learning. It is built on humanistic values: dignity, integrity, responsibility, equality. You can fulfill these values and carry on these traditions. Ensure the future of Humanistic Judaism by remembering the Society in your will or estate plan. You will be recognized in the SHJ's Heritage Circle, which honors those who support the Society through a planned gift.

Planned giving is easy to arrange and does not disrupt your current cash flow. Bequests and other types of planned gifts, including life insurance and annuities, also can provide you income and/or tax benefits. And in 2009, if you are 70½, you can make a tax-free distribution from your Individual Retirement Account to the Society for Humanistic Judaism. To learn more, kindly e-mail bonniecousens@shj.org or phone 248-478-7610.

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We extend our sympathy to his family.
He was a mensch's mensch and a true friend
to each of us and to Humanistic Judaism.

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SHJ UPCOMING EVENTS

October 16-18, 2009	RABBINIC CANDIDATE NATAN FUCHS VISIT TO KOL HAVERIM, FINGER LAKES COMMUNITY FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, NY. Contact: Joyce Frank, chair@kolhaverim.net.
October 23-25, 2009	COLLOQUIUM '09, "Challenging Convention: Secular & Humanist & Jew," Farmington Hills, MI. Contact: IISHJ, (248) 476-9532, info@iishj.org.
November 13-15, 2009	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO ORAYNU CONGREGATION, Toronto, ON. Contact: (416) 385-3910, info@oraynu.org.
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.
September 8-9, 2010	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS ROSH HASHANA VISIT TO KOL HADASH, Northern California. Contact: info@kolhadash.org, (510) 428-1492.
September 17-18, 2010	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS YOM KIPPUR VISIT TO CONGREGATION BETH ADAM, Boca Raton, FL. Contact: info@bethadam.com, (561) 443-1769. info@shj.org.

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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.