

Humanorah

the newsletter of the Society for Humanistic Judaism

affiliated with the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews



Spring, 2007

Vol. 29, No. 3

SHJ PRESIDENT LOU ALTMAN PROUD TO PARTICIPATE IN SECULAR COALITION

Some weeks ago I flew to Washington to attend a meeting of the board of directors of the Secular Coalition for America. This is an organization that maintains a lobbyist whose job it is to advocate for the positions of non-theists on political issues which come before the United States Congress. There are a number of such issues which affect the interests of all humanists (whether they are Jewish or not) and the interests of all Jews (whether they are humanistic or not). Here are some of those issues:

- Giving federal money to faith-based institutions, especially those that discriminate in hiring on the basis of religion (guess who gets excluded);
- Issuance of federal vouchers to religious schools;
- Federal funding of the Boy Scouts of America, which excludes atheists and homosexuals;
- Legislation concerning the refusal of pharmacists on religious grounds to fulfill prescriptions for the morning-after pill;
- Same-sex marriage/civil union;
- Legislation making it more expensive or impossible to bring First Amendment Establishment-of-religion claims in federal courts;
- Government funding of fetal stem cell research;
- Legal restrictions on a woman's right to have an abortion;
- Teaching of "intelligent design" in public school biology classes as though it were a scientific hypothesis instead of a religious dogma;

- Political opposition to vaccination of young girls against human papilloma virus, on religious grounds favoring sexual abstinence;

- "Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance.

- Forced indoctrination of service personnel by military chaplains;



The coalition's lobbyist is a soft-spoken, intelligent, articulate young woman attorney named Lori Lippman Brown who has the knack of explaining our position on such issues in such a clear and reasonable way that politicians of the religious majority listen to her. In addition to her lobbying activities, Lori speaks to groups all over the country and is frequently interviewed by the media. (Incidentally, Lori was raised as a secular Jew, and she's a member of the Society for Humanistic Judaism.)

Want to stay abreast of Washington activities which may affect religious freedom? Sign up for free e-alerts on the Secular Coalition website: secular.org.

I am pleased to say that our Society for Humanistic Judaism is one of the constituent organizations of this coalition. Who else belongs? The American Humanist Association, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the Secular Student Alliance, the Institute for Humanist Studies (an impressive humanist think-tank), the Atheist Alliance International, the Secular Web (Internet Infidels), and the

continued on next page

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WASHINGTON, DC

MACHAR, CSHJ

CANADA

ORAYNU, TORONTO, ON

SHJ PRESIDENT CONTINUED...

Military Association of Atheists and Free-thinkers. That's a broad and diverse group.

Notice that within the coalition we are unique, in that we are the only organization which is religious. Thus we are making common cause with groups which are non-Jewish and non-religious and even non-civilian. And so we should. We should pursue the interests of humanism, and of religious freedom, in collaboration with rational people of all kinds. We are a responsible member of a community dedicated to preserving a U.S. government based on human reason rather than sectarian doctrine.

Every one of these organizations is a small fish in a theistic sea. So we need to stand together on issues of mutual interest and amplify our voice. I am proud of SHJ for pulling together on such issues of fundamental importance to our interests. And I

feel fortunate that being president of SHJ enables me to participate personally in this important effort.

There's one fly in the ointment, however: the Secular Coalition is a lobbying organization, so contributions to it are not tax-deductible. Moreover, SHJ cannot give money to it without jeopardizing its own tax-deductible status. So how does SHJ support the Coalition? Here's how: some of us in SHJ make contributions directly to the Coalition.

You can do it too. Make out a check to the Secular Coalition for America, mail it to the Society for Humanistic Judaism at the address below, and the check will be forwarded to the Coalition. The Coalition will credit the Society for the contribution, and you will feel good about helping to preserve religious freedom in this country.



**A BIT
OF
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BY
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Spring 2007

Humanorah

Vol. 29, No. 3

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.

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Notes From Around the Globe



MACHAR'S ALL-AGE BAND ENGAGED IN TRADITION

The Machar Band of Machar, The Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism is a multi-generational music troupe that plays klezmer, traditional Jewish, Yiddish and American folk songs. On any given day, we have trombones, trumpets, guitars, clarinets, violins, cellos and saxophones beating out tunes for the congregation and area Jewish events.



For years, our former music director, Ken Giles, would warm up parents and children with his guitar and voice on Sunday mornings, just before classes at the Jewish Cultural School. He eventually started asking kids from the congregation to join in. This began with some percussion, then a saxophone and eventually a whole set of instruments played by kids as young as four and as old as, well, let's just say that some of the kids were retired.

Over the years, the Band has become a tradition at Machar. When we're in top form, we have over ten players belting out tunes like *Bashana*, *Erev Shel Shoshanim*, *Hava Nagila* and *Imagine*. In addition to playing each Sunday for the school, we play at the Washington Jewish Folk Arts Festival as well as for the *b'nai mitsva* ceremonies of our congregation.

Key to the Band is playing songs relevant to the season. So, on *Hanukka* we play tunes like *Light One Candle*, (Peter Yarrow) *S'vivon*, and *I Have a Little Dreidel*. On *Purim* we play *My Esther*, and *Oh Today, We'll Merry, Merry Be*.

To commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we play *The Times They are A'Changin'*, *We Shall Not be Moved*, and *We Shall Overcome*. On special occasions we've been known to teach some funny parodies to honor our members.

Music is integral to Jewish culture. Our heritage is full of songs that record our collective history, envision our highest aspira-

tions and make fun of the kinds of people we are. The Machar Band uses music to teach our traditions and pique concern about social challenges, ranging from the search for peace to commitments toward social justice and environmental sanity.

Each year, young musicians come out of the woodwork to play along. The sound isn't exactly the Israeli Philharmonic. At times, we sound more like the Petticoat Junction band than a Jewish Congregation music troupe. But we care more about including everyone who wants to play than creating the world's most beautiful music. We see the Band as an evolving work in progress that, like much else in Machar, finds itself, ironically, making the most of Jewish traditions as it refuses to organize itself in the mold of simply what has been handed down.

Music helps us dance through life. Many see these days as dark times. The Machar Band tries to shed a little light in the midst of such darkness—light that can lighten our load, help us celebrate the wonders and bring us together in song.

Paul Wapner, Machar Band Director



CAN YOU TOP THIS?

LAGUNA WOODS MEMBER CELEBRATES BIRTHDAY #101

January 27 produced a cold and windy night by California standards and many members stayed home. But Rose Gruen wasn't about to be stopped. She turned up, clad in a cheery, red coat to celebrate her 101st birthday. When members shared their New Year's resolutions, she announced that she "hoped to be here again next year." Now that's dedication.

We meet every Friday night and pride ourselves on the programs we offer. When a highly respected professor from a local college presented an illustrated talk on Mark Chagall, we had an especially super evening.

In February, we celebrated the life of Betty Friedan, SHJ Humanist of the Year. We lit a *yarzeit* candle and read a little bit about her life. The evening was designated as our annual Federation *Oneg Shabbat*. With members eager to know how their donations were being spent, it was nice to have an eloquent young South African-born Israeli—who now lives here—report on her recent visit to Northern Israel. Our members are quick to answer appeals and this personalized report was much appreciated.

We look forward to welcoming Rabbi Sherwin Wine the weekend of June 8-10 when we will have our installation dinner Friday night, followed by a two-session seminar on

Saturday and then a Sunday morning coffee for those interested in exchanging ideas with him. We hope to attract nonmembers and have also invited all Southern California SHJ groups to join us.

Sheila Bass, president, Orange County S.H.J., Laguna Woods

CITY CONGREGATION SUMMARIZES SEASON

Greetings from The City Congregation in New York City! We had a wonderful and productive 2006-2007 beginning with a large turnout of members and guests for the first High Holiday season presided over by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer since his formal installation as our rabbi. *Rosh Hashana* commemorated the fifth anniversary of the 9-11 tragedy and featured personal reflections by members Janice Eidus, John Kastan and Ken Lewis. On *Yom Kippur*, members Howard Segan and Cynthia Chalker offered their views on tolerance, which led to a stimulating congregational discussion.

From September on, TCC has celebrated the *bar/bat mitzvas* of Ben Weitz, Danielle Nourok and Kyra Zimmerman. We also hosted many *Shabbats* with exciting speakers such as Ruth Messinger, president and executive director of American Jewish World Service, who shared her first-hand accounts of visiting Darfur; political media consultant David Garth, who discussed the influences in his life that led him to politics and his view on the role of Jews in politics; and a great Saturday morning brunch *Shabbat* featuring a screening of member Ben Sternhell's *bar mitzva* project, a film entitled "Who Is A Jew? The Movie," which examines Jewish identity and how one becomes Jewish.

We introduced a new "Shabbat Outing" format, offering non-liturgical activities to share together at the end of the week. The first Outing was a viewing of the documentary *Encounter Point*, a film about Israeli and Palestinian civilian-led, non-violent efforts to build a base for peace in the Middle East.

Our KidSchool has approximately 70 children enrolled, ranging from pre-schoolers to a Teen Group. Our *Kehilla Circle*, which starts each KidSchool session, has given families a chance to bond, learning new songs and hearing wonderful stories, courtesy of our teacher and song leader Aram Rubenstein Gillis and storyteller and member Alan Siegel.

Our Adult Perspectives program began a new segment called "Sunday Salon and Schmooze," which is currently exploring aspects of Jewish identity with Rabbi Schweitzer.

We have improved the infrastructure of the congregation this year and our website (www.citycongregation.org), e-mail communications, and newsletter. We also purchased a congregational software program called Rakefet to facilitate recordkeeping.

We are growing and thriving and welcome all who wish to find out more about us to attend our events!

Susan Ryan, member, The City Congregation, New York
Photo: Sheila Bass helps Rose Gruen celebrate her 101st birthday.

BETH CHAVERIM'S "JUDAISM IN ACTION" INTO 3RD YEAR

Rich Horn and his fifth and sixth grade class at Beth Chaverim are happy to announce that they were one of the first 50, 100% correct entrants in the recent *Babaganewz*, Torah Study Contest. They are hoping to win an ice cream party for their class!

Beth Chaverim's program "Judaism in Action" is in its third year. Each year we take a *mitsva*, a good deed, and put it into action in our school. In its first year we focused on kindness to animals; last year we chose feeding the hungry. This year's *mitsva* is disability awareness. The overall *mitsva* is based on the verses "Love your neighbor as yourself," and "Do not put a stumbling block before the blind or speak ill of the deaf." It is dignity for everyone.

Putting disability awareness into action, we toured the facility in which we hold school, a community center for people with developmental disabilities, and focused on the extra care taken to make the entire building accessible for all people. In December, we assisted Keshet (Founded in 1982, Keshet provides educational, recreational and vocational programs for children and young adults with special needs) in Northbrook, Illinois at their *Hanukka* party, where we helped make holiday cards.

We also hosted "Kids On The Block," a program offered through the Community Foundation for Jewish Education with which we are affiliated. This is a sensi-



tivity learning program originated in 1977 that uses puppets—including one in a wheel chair because he has cerebral palsy—for children to understand and develop compassion for those with disabilities. We enhanced our holiday curricular units along the same theme, learning the sign language symbols for *Hanukka* and *dreidel*, and we will examine a braille *haggada* at Passover.

Our *tsedaka* money will be used to make a contribution to organizations helping those with disabilities.

Linda Horn, administrator, Deerfield, Illinois

MORRIS COUNTY KIDS CREATE B'NAI MITSVA SHABBAT

The CHJ of Morris County, New Jersey has some exciting things to report. Our Sunday School kids learned about *tsedaka* and brought in their *tsedaka* boxes for show and tell. We used the *tsedaka* funds to celebrate *Tu Bi Shevat* and had several trees planted in Israel and in Newark, NJ.

We approved a new *b'nai mitsva* curriculum and our *b'nai mitsva* kids created and led our first *B'nai Mitsva Shabbat* Service for the congregation! Despite a snowy night, we had a decent turnout. We used segments from their *b'nai mitsva* class assignments (an essay on defining "Humanistic Judaism, Our Values and Beliefs") and incorporated them into our service so many parts of the

service were in their own words. It helped them develop their leadership skills, gave them a chance to use their knowledge of Humanistic Judaism and articulate their values. It was also great for the up-and-coming students to see what will be expected of them.

Lisa Littman, president of Morris County CHJ

Use **Goodsearch.com** 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!

BOCA GROUP FOCUSES ON STUDENTS' / ADULT EDUCATION

Educating our members and our larger community has been Congregation Beth Adam's focus. We were thrilled to have Rabbi Miriam Jerris provide us with a weekend of learning in December. From a humanistic perspective, she discussed "Being Jewish in an Open, Multi-Cultural Society" and "Exploring the Myths of Jewish Inter-marriages." In February we hosted a weekend long IISHJ seminar, "Jews in the Modern World," with Rabbi Sherwin Wine, who captivated us with his knowledge.

During January, the post mitsva students were also busy continuing their education, while supporting CBA and demonstrating their commitment to social action by participating in the "Save Darfur" rally.

Jenny Cohn and Schuyler Jarvis attended two exhibits in Ft. Lauderdale. The first, "The Jews of Czestochowa" exhibit at the Alvin



Gallery at Nova Southeastern University highlighted the town of Czestochowa, Poland through pictures, sculptures and the testimonies of that town's Holocaust survivors. The exhibit showed how a vibrant Jewish community begun in the early 1600s would be destroyed by the Nazis.

Next, they went to the Art Museum of Ft. Lauderdale to view the exhibit "Cradle of Christianity, Treasures from the Holy Land." This exhibit explored the shared history of Judaism and Christianity as it developed in the Holy Land.

Jenny, Schuyler, and Andrew Evans next attended a film about Simon Wiesenthal, the famous Nazi Hunter. The film showed how an ordinary man who had no connections to any law enforcement agency or politicians became a great figure in bringing Nazi war criminals to justice.

Jenny Cohn also helped staff our table at the Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach Synagogue

Showcase, answering questions about Humanistic Judaism and Beth Adam.

Last, Jenny and Andrew participated in the "Save Darfur" rally at Temple Beth El to help stop the genocide and save the people of Darfur. They passed out literature, had petitions signed, and collected donations.

CBA is proud of our young adults' desires to continue their education, their dedication to Beth Adam and commitment to social action causes. *B.J. Saul, president, Boca Raton*

ADAT CHAVERIM TO PARTICIPATE IN "BIG SUNDAY" IN MAY

Adat Chaverim, CHJ, Los Angeles, has been busy. Our February 16 service, led by Earl Shiffman with JoAnn Schoenrock leading a discussion, honored Betty Freidan—her history, philosophy and vision. It was a stimulating evening with women remembering what they had experienced in the past and sometimes now too. We have come a long way and still have a long way to go.

In March the Cultural School and congregation celebrated Purim together. On March 24, we sponsored, along with the Jewish Center at

Milken, a staged play reading, "King David and His Concubine" a love story, starring ED ASNER (nice living near Hollywood!). The author was none other than our own Fred Simmons. Richard Green, member of Adat Chaverim, was the co-star.

Our *seder*, chaired by Nancy and Steve Bradley, was partially catered and partially pot luck. We have some really good cooks at Adat Chaverim and some great restaurants in the San Fernando Valley. The service was led by our cantor, Earl Shiffman, with music by Trudy Behar.

During May, Adat Chaverim participates in "Big Sunday," a citywide special event. Work involves cleaning up the beaches, fixing food for shelters, gathering and taking items to shelters.

We fill our calendar with services on the 3rd Friday of each month, Adult Discussion on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, Adult Education on the last school Sunday of the month and, of course, Cultural School each Sunday morning. We are planning a fundraiser for the summer.

Brenda Jeffreys, Los Angeles

Building Community

What To Do During Your Summer Vacation by Rabbi Miriam Jerris

With Passover behind us, the last thing you want right now is a list of tasks for the summer. Trust me. I'm suggesting seven fun and significant ideas that will help you create a stronger, more cohesive community, ease your work and invigorate you for the coming programming year. Do this:

1. Set Your Program Calendar

Use the summer to set your schedule for 12 to 18 months out. Decide when to hold holiday celebrations, *Shabbat* programs, adult education programs, school days, prospective member meetings, and fundraising and social events. Think about special events occurring in the next year or so and set them into your calendar. Schedule your annual meeting, new member recognition event, and your membership recognition program. Schedule the movement events into your calendar – SHJ conferences and meetings, youth and young adult conclaves and the Institute seminars and colloquium. Depending on the size of your community, you may develop your youth and adult calendars separately, then finalize by bringing the two together. Reserve your meeting space for the next calendar year, including rental space for the 2008 High Holidays.

2. Plan Programs

Once you have a schedule in place, begin to slot programs. Consider a full day retreat in order to do this, bringing together your major leadership to brainstorm for the coming year and the future. Involving more than one or two people in planning helps members feel invested in the programming. You create a core of leadership who are engaged and enthused. You develop an automatic cheerleading squad. In planning ahead, you will be able to recruit

volunteers to work the events. You can prepare a preliminary budget for each event so that you have the information you need when you prepare your overall budget.

3. Prepare for the Fall Holidays

By late spring, your holiday liturgy committee should be in place. Summer is the time to rewrite/spruce up holiday celebrations. Everything should be ready for the printer at least a month before the holidays. This year *Rosh Hashana* is September 12-13; *Yom Kippur*, September 21-22.

4. Bridge the Gap; Substitute Social for Regular Programming

A major concern for congregations is the gap that may exist between the adult and school communities. A multi-generational member picnic is a perfect event to bring everyone together in a "just for fun" setting. Create a multi-generational committee to plan the event. Ensure that representatives from both adult and school communities attend by assigning responsibilities to each. Not only can an event of this type bridge the generation gap, but it can strengthen the bonds between members and help build a more caring community. Depending on your size, you may want to do a series of social events to build community, like a theater trip or a visit to an amusement park.

5. Develop Board Relationships

Summer is the time for a board retreat. Although it can certainly be used for training or planning, it can also be a social event where board members get to know one another in a more relaxed and informal setting. Make sure that you eat at least one meal together. You will be happy to know that when you



break bread together and when the bonds of friendship develop, members of the board tend to be kinder to and more considerate of one another.

6. Plan for the Future

Strategic and long range planning is an ideal project for the summer. Unburdened by the demands of regular programming, your key leaders can meet to visualize and plan for the future. The Society can share examples of strategic plans to get you started.

7. Take a Break

Stretch your board meeting schedule to every six weeks instead of every month. Suspend your regular program and substitute one or more social events instead. When the holidays arrive and school starts, your members will happily anticipate the regular schedule and new programs. Using these ideas will provide a change of pace and a reenergized community.

Got E_MAIL?

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

INSIDE THE CONGREGATION AND OUT, ALL PITCH IN TO HELP

The Secular Jewish Circle of Puget Sound has been busy. The students of our Sunday school, Shalom Sunday, recently met with a cross-section of our community for a *Tu Bi Shevat seder*. It was a wonderful event with a short service followed by everyone planting trees at a local park. The *b'nai mitsva* students stayed after to help repair damage caused by heavy storms that had passed through Seattle.

This year, SJC joined in the Purim fun with the Seattle Jewish Community Center. We ran our own booth and participated in the carnival. Once again, the *b'nai mitsva* kids did the lion's share of the work.

There are many more activities and events to talk about, but the most fun seems to come from just watching the mix of ages and family make-ups mingling at most of these events. It really is satisfying to see the kids mingling with the senior set. It drives home that sense of community.

Another rewarding piece of news is the work being done on our Steering

Committee. Following Judi Gladstone's long-time leadership, Robin Gitelman has stepped into those large shoes and been steadfast in her efforts to improve community operations.

We have launched our new website, www.secularjewishcircle.org. It's still a work in progress, but it's a nice step in the right direction.

As with many SHJ communities, the Secular Jewish Circle has a core group of volunteers who do the majority of the work. As that core group again voiced concerns of burnout, Robin and the Steering Committee recommitted themselves to developing a Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan defines a practical structure and sequence of steps for growing our community and sets out the goals and actions the Steering Committee will commit to overseeing. These goals and actions are NOT the sole responsibility of the Steering Committee, but of the entire SJC community. The Steering Committee will just "steer."

I know this must sound to some like a small thing, but to have a plan laid out in front of us and to see exactly what projects the community will tackle next is both liberating and energizing. The Plan focuses mostly on the infrastructure of the community, making it easier to plan and organize events and perform the administrative functions of our growing family. I encourage you to take a look at our Strategic Plan and use what may be useful to you and your community and to provide us with any feedback or input you may have from your growing experiences. The Secular Jewish Circle Strategic Plan can be found on our website at www.secularjewishcircle.org, under *Membership*.

We have high hopes that by focusing on how the community is organized and run, the community will have an easier time participating, growing and thinking about how to be a more effective and welcoming community. We'll keep you posted on our progress.

Steve Rowe, co-chair, SJC, WA

FROM NANA AND PAPA WITH LOVE: THE PERFECT GIFT FOR YOUR BAR OR BAT MITSVA

For Humanistic Jews, a *mitsva* signifies a good deed. Becoming a *bar or bat mitsva* means that an adolescent has begun some thoughtful participation in Jewish communal life, engaging in community service and a course of study as well.

What better way to celebrate this important rite of passage than with a gift of a Lifetime Membership to the Society for Humanistic Judaism. For \$1,800 you can provide for your grandchild a lifelong association with Humanistic Judaism—through a special internet discussion group for teen members; the Society's Journal, *Humanistic Judaism*; and the *Humanorah* and news of all Movement activities such as the Youth Conclave, seminars and classes. Member costs to all events will apply.

Contact the SHJ office for further information at 248-478-7610 or info@shj.org

CLUBS, SPEAKERS CEREMONIES, DINNERS KEEP PACIFIC FOLK ON THE GO!

The Pacific Community of Cultural Jews in Orange County, California is alive and well. In January, we had our monthly book and video club meeting in which members watched and discussed the film, *The Quarrel*, about two Holocaust survivors, one Orthodox and one atheistic, who continue an argument about God, which they had started before the war. We also had our monthly “Dine Out” and an outing to see Olympia Dukakis in the one-woman play, *Rose*, about a Holocaust survivor.

We celebrated Betty Friedan, SHJ Humanist of the Year, at one of our *Havdala* dinners, where we preceded the dinner with a candlelight ceremony and tribute to her. Following the dinner, one of our members lectured on the tremendous influence of the Jews on the economy of Europe throughout history. Another interesting *Shabbat* dinner included a lecture by Steve Spanier, director of the Orange County chapter of Reclaim Democracy. He spoke about the practices of modern corporations, their impact and what we, as consumers, can do to fight back.

Alice Selfridge, president



The 10th anniversary luncheon honored all Sarasota CHJ past and present presidents shown above with the exception of Ettie Handelman, the first president, who was unable to attend. In order of succession from right back to left: Betty and Stan Pelletz, Joan and Ron Fox, Tobi Willcher, Arlene Pearlman, Sim and Irv Lesser. photo by Jules Altenberg.

SARASOTA CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY

This year’s Scholar-In-Residence program with Rabbi Wine drew more than 350 people to the Friday night service, of whom 25 or so had to stand. Both the Saturday and Sunday seminars had about 100 people. Rabbi Wine took us through the journeys that the Ashkenazim took and since most of the participants were from Ashkenazic heritage, it was very easy to relate to his lectures.

At our November Krisitallnacht service, our Humanaires sang very stirring songs about the Partisans, and Richard Bergman, from the Sarasota/Manatee Jewish Federation, presented stories about them. This was followed, a few weeks later, with an appearance by Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Our most exciting event this year, however, was the celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of CHJ in

Sarasota. This took place at PalmAire Country Club where 200 congregants had a wonderful lunch, saw a PowerPoint presentation which told “The Wondrous Story” of the birth and growth of our congregation, ending with a candle lighting ceremony honoring the five past presidents whose great leadership was responsible for the development of CHJ. This was then followed by dancing and clapping to a Klezmer band in which our own CHJers participated.

In March, one of our congregants, Dr. Norman Ellison, a clinical psychologist, spoke on Jewish Humanist Sigmund Freud. Later in March, Jerry Springer addressed the congregation on “Must Jews Be Liberal?” At this same service, a presentation on the disastrous situation in Darfur by our Social Action Committee urged all congregants to participate in the Darfur Rally on April 15.

Sim and Irv Lesser, presidents

PARTICIPATE IN SHJ COMMUNITY SERVICE MONTH THIS MAY

KOL HAVERIM WILL PROVIDE SUMMER CAMP TO HELP THEMSELVES AND ITHACA COMMUNITY

In the last few months, Kol Haverim has celebrated, laughed, cried and eaten cake. First, we celebrated. More than 70 of us enjoyed *Hanukka*, watching our younger Sunday schoolers perform an Israeli folk dance, followed by older students playing klezmer music.

Next came tears as approximately 55 people attended our **International Holocaust Remembrance Day Event. We raised over \$400 for the Save Darfur Coalition.** After a short remembrance service, we featured a newly released documentary, *Saved By Deportation: An Unknown Odyssey of Polish Jews*. After the film, the film's editor and its music composer, both local to Ithaca, led a question-and-answer session. *Saved By Deportation* premiered on December 3, 2006 at the Washington Jewish Film Festival in D.C. and walked away with the audience award for best film. The official Ithaca premier will be in April by Cornell Cinema, so we greatly appreciated the director, Slawomir Grunberg, letting us preview the film to raise awareness about the Holocaust and funds to help Darfur.

Jewish Humor Night provided laughter and good belly aches. Some went beyond typical Jewish jokes to tell *Humanistic* Jewish jokes. I think that means the movement has come a long way, baby!

Finally, we ate cake as we celebrated **Darwin Day**, a tribute to science and humanity. More than 40 adults (and about a dozen kids) came to this birthday party, where we participated in a philosophical discussion led by Will Provine, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at Cornell University. Dr. Provine reviewed the relationship between Darwin and his deeply religious friend and colleague, Asa Gray, to illuminate controversies still relevant today. Our social action committee gave out information about policies related to **stem-cell research, sex education, climate change, and other areas where religious ideology, rather than science, is currently influencing public policy.** Playing some natural selection games, the kids learned to appreciate adaptations, such as their own thumbs and the diverse peaks of birds (all modified from Access Excellence: The National Health Museum).

We look ahead to the upcoming holidays, events, and opportunities for community service. We'll acknowledge

Humanist of the Year, Betty Friedan, in April during the service prior to when Cornell professor Joan Jacobs Brumberg will speak about **Jewish girls and their "Body Projects,"** based on her research into the unpublished diaries of teenagers, spanning the years 1830-1990.

We'll be hosting more monthly book drives for the Family Reading Partnership. We'll kick off **May Community Service Month** early because April 29 is Mitsva Day when local university students volunteer to assist local congregations with their community service efforts. This will be the start of our bagged lunch program, when we collect donated lunch fixings, assemble and wrap sandwiches and bag them with fruits, veggies, and treats, and then deliver these bagged lunches to a nearby charity that gives them away to people in need.

In Ithaca, working families face a particularly tough situation in late August: public schools are not open yet but nearly every camp closes as counselors return to Cornell in mid-August. With this community need in mind, **Kol Haverim will sponsor a one-week summer day camp in late August! Any child in elementary school is eligible to enroll in Camp Imagine ("above us only sky"), an outdoor nature camp.** The camp space we will use is owned and operated by a program called EarthArts, which runs nature/pottery camps most of the year, except in late August. By making arrangements with an existing camp, we avoided issues of insurance, space, counselors, and bookkeeping. Kol Haverim will provide the theme, two teen assistant counselors (who will receive training by EarthArts staff in May), daily visits by our Sunday school music instructor, daily visits by community "elders," afternoon snacks, and camp t-shirts.

The "elders" program creates cross-generational connections as one older person visits each morning. During the "elder" visit, the children demonstrate respect, seating the elder in a special chair, serving tea and snacks, pampering the person, and then listening while they tell/read a story. For the theme, we selected the 3-R's of Humanism: Respect, Responsibility, and Reasoning. Activities will emphasize these values. We hope the kids develop good friendships and learn life-long lessons, and that this will help our community grow.

Caren Cooper, Chair, Ithaca, New York

OR EMET WARMS WINTER WITH PROMISE OF HOT TIME

On a cold Sunday morning in February, to celebrate *Tu BiShevat*, member Bruce Monson presented an interesting environmental program: “Mercury and Fish: A Toxic Combination.” As a mercury researcher, he analyzes and interprets mercury data from lakes, rivers and global mercury research projects.

Then Or Emet held its first *Tu Bi Shevat seder*. It was written by members Janet Mayer and Muriel Sterne and conducted by Faith Oremland with accompaniment by Amy Stubenhaus on the guitar. Having the example of Beth Chaverim’s (Deerfield, Il) *Tu Bi Shevat seder* materials was a greatly appreciated help. To encourage attendance on the

40 degree below zero wind-chilling morning, I emailed a poem to everyone, entitled “For a Hot Time.”

Also in February, we honored Betty Friedan as 2007 SHJ Humanist of the Year with a tribute written by Phillip Griffin, past president of Or Emet.

In March we welcomed Rabbi Reut Hammer, one of Israel’s recently ordained humanist rabbis, to join us for our *Purim* celebration. I connected with Reut by chance through a conversation with the Israeli community *shaliach*, Shlomo Weinish. He and his wife Drora were hosting the Hammers. Reut had accompanied her husband, an Israeli hero, who was speaking at local schools.

“Heroes of Israel” became our next event and the kick off to Y o m



Ha’atzmaut. The theme, this year, was the Ethiopian Jews and their *aliya* to Israel. We marked the 15th anniversary of Operation Salomon with speaker, Senator Rudy Boschwitz, who had negotiated with the Ethiopian regime. A young Ethiopian woman, Mazi Melesa, who was rescued as a young girl, also spoke.

This winter marked the first time our cofounder and past president, Dr. Harold Londer, was asked to speak at the St. Paul Jewish Community Center on Humanistic Judaism.

Margo Fox, president. Photo: Reut

TRIANGLE MAKES ITS PRESENCE KNOWN IN CHAPEL HILL, DURHAM NEIGHBORHOOD

This has been a year of involvement for the Triangle Congregation for Humanistic Judaism. Under the dedicated leadership of the newly installed board, we have seen increased participation by our members in programs, the Sunday school and holiday and *Shabbat* celebrations. As always, our High Holiday celebrations were meaningful and moving.

Our *Hanukka* celebration witnessed well over 100 participants of all ages. Humanistic Jews also were involved in the Chapel Hill-Durham Jewish Federation sponsored “Go Mitzvah” program to relieve non-Jews of their responsibilities so they could celebrate their holiday season.

We enjoyed a new *Tu Bi Shevat seder* program this year, and our *Purim* celebration featured the return of an even more elaborate puppet theatre and performance, all designed, built and performed by the children, including a very creative *megilla* reading. The Passover Second Night *Seder* is always a highlight of our year. Now we look forward to the *b’nai mitsva* of four young men who are presently preparing.

We have a strong presence in the community, participating in meal preparation for the homeless shelter, the Community Dinner, as well as having a representative on the Chapel Hill-Durham Jewish Federation Board.

Marv Axelrod, North Carolina

Mazel Tov
on your
anniversaries

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Kol Hadash HC,
Illinois

10th:
CHJ Sarasota

20th:
Kol Hadash
N. California CHJ
&
Or Emet CHJ
Minnesota

RABBIS IN THE NEWS

Humanist Rabbi Greg Epstein reminds us that April 20-22 is the weekend of “The New Humanism” conference at Harvard University. The conference is in honor of the 30th anniversary of Harvard’s humanist chaplaincy and “is designed to demonstrate that Humanism is a multi-cultural and multi-national world movement that best represents the otherwise unrepresented, under-appreciated 1.1 billion non-religious people on Earth.” Included among the many speakers are novelist Salman Rushdie on “Humanistic Islam” and **Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine, 2003 American Humanist of the Year**, who will speak on “Humanistic Judaism,” the international movement he founded more than 40 years ago. For further information, email gepstein@hds.harvard.edu.

Rabbi Adam Chalom of Kol Hadash, Illinois and his congregation will host an International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism (IISHJ) seminar entitled “To Life! Celebrating the Jewish Life Cycle.” This April 27-29 seminar is open to both matriculating students and the general public. More information is available by calling 847-347-3003 or emailing info@kolhadash.com. Rabbi Chalom is the Associate Dean of the IISHJ.

Rabbi Tamara Kolton, recently, treated The Birmingham Temple to two innovative events: more recently, the Temple *seder*, which this year also marked the 39th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. To commemorate his life, she invited members of a local gospel church choir to lead her community in singing songs that paid tribute to the Civil Rights Movement, to enjoy the *seder* dinner together and then “join hands in ‘Walking out of Egypt.’” The other new event provided the Temple with a “Rock the House *Shabbat*.” Led by Kolton and David Appelman, the director of the Detroit Jewish community’s Zamir Chorale, the community experienced an evening of saxophone, drums, piano and the sounds of jazz and rock in familiar and new Jewish and folk music.

Photo: Biber delivers Maryland’s Senate invocation.



Machar’s Rabbi Ben Biber, invited to deliver the invocation at the Maryland state senate session in Annapolis, last February, used the trip for two purposes: together with Machar members Deb and David Godden, he engaged in advocacy work with the Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition and then addressed the Senate. He said, “We were able to use our trip to Annapolis to work for social justice and to raise people’s consciousness of secular humanism as a philosophy that inspires and guides such efforts.”

The January ordination of **Rabbi Jay Heyman** at Kol Hadash, Northern California followed the International Institute’s ordination of seven secular Israeli rabbis in Jerusalem in December. **SHJ Community Development Rabbi Miriam Jerris** delivered the charge. “Talented humanistic rabbis lead from the inside,” she said. “They learn the skills of their members and together form a partnership.” Rabbi *Jay* responded, “I will pay attention to your joys and your concerns. I will ask you your priorities. I will challenge you to realize our mutual goals. I will ask for help in my efforts and will value your feedback. I will speak out in love and listen with compassion. I will serve faithfully and with a steadfast spirit.” **Rabbi Judith Seid**, also in attendance, represented the Association of Humanistic Rabbis.

For 14 years **Rabbi Peter H. Schweitzer** offered his services to The City Congregation as a volunteer while working as a clinical social worker for the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services in Brooklyn. Last summer he was formally installed as the congregation’s full-time rabbi. **Said Schweitzer**, “I’m thrilled at the opportunity to serve the congregation and the Movement as a paid rabbi. The job is wonderfully fulfilling and I’m busier than ever. I also have wonderful support from a committed leadership and membership. There is no end to the creative possibilities that lie ahead, and we look forward to continuing to grow our community and spread our message.” **Rabbi Sherwin Wine**, who officiated at the installation service, said, “Peter Schweitzer is a man of integrity who refused to remain in the rabbinate so long as he could not serve as a Humanistic rabbi. This celebration is a tribute to the strength of his convictions and to the commitment of his congregation to provide a full-service Humanistic Jewish congregation to the New York Jewish world.”

Harriet Maza, editor

From the Executive Director, Bonnie Cousens

Society for Humanistic Judaism, Supportive of Human Needs



Like many SHJ members, I no longer live in the city where I was born. My children live in other states and few family members live nearby. Like others, I need community. I find it in the Society for Humanistic Judaism. As members of the SHJ, each of us

has opportunities to bond with other Humanistic Jews who share our beliefs. Our needs for friendship and support are met. We find family to share our sorrows, our joys. “But isn’t that what we find in our individual communities?” you ask. “What does the Society do?”

•Resources for Communities and Members: SHJ helps your community family grow. Have a question about organizational development? An administrative problem? Are you seeking training or advice for board members and leaders, for yourself? Need help developing a fundraising campaign? A marketing strategy? Brochures or advertising? SHJ is only a phone call away.

•Visits from Rabbi Sherwin Wine, Rabbi Miriam Jerris, and others: A weekend of programs provided by SHJ leadership: a *Shabbat* celebration, a seminar for the community, a program with your families or school, training for your board. Involved in visits this year were Adat Chaverim, Beth Adam, Beth Ami, Beth Chaverim, The City Congregation, CHJ Fairfield County, CHJ Morris County, CHJ Sarasota, HJ Congregation San Diego, Kol Hadash Northern California, Machar, Or Emet, Westchester CHJ. If your community hasn’t planned a visit yet, call and request one.

•Organizing Communities: Is there a “hot spot,” an interest in Humanistic Judaism? Is there someone there to organize? We’ll help you organize an SHJ community. This year we’re helping members in Naples, FL; the southern suburbs of Boston; and on the Peninsula in Northern California. Can we help you?

•Youth Programs: Break the typical pattern – thirteen and out. Let us help you build your youth group. Encourage teens and college students to join the HuJews online list. Fund their participation in HuJews annual conclaves (in Los Angeles in 2008). Tell us where they are going to college. Together we can build the HuJews Youth Network.

•Publications: Want something to read? Try the library of books given to every community: *Judaism Beyond God, Celebration, Judaism in a Secular Age, An Anthology of Secular Humanistic Jewish Thought*, and our journal *Humanistic Judaism*. Discover our member newsletter, *Humanorah*; our board members’ newsletter; *Leader Reader*; monthly *Society Pages* for publication in your newsletter; holiday resource kits; a youth group manual.

•Holiday Materials: Need a celebration for your community or for home? High Holiday celebrations, *Sukkot* stories, *Hanukka* candlelightings and gift packs, *Tu Bi-Shevat seders*, *Purim* plays, *Haggadot* for humanistic holiday celebrations, holiday gifts for our teens and young adults.

•Events: Read about Conference 2006 in the latest issue of *Humanistic Judaism*. Come to Conference 2008 in Los Angeles – it will be an amazing event, returning to the West Coast after 15 years. Encourage your teens and young adults to join our conclaves. Explore the puzzle of Jewish Muslim relationships at Colloquium ’07.

•Communication: Press releases, sample newsletter articles, advertising tips, study guides, curricula, all sent to community leaders and available to all. A members-only online resource library for your use. And now member only e-mails. Sign up today (info@shj.org) and stay abreast of happenings in SHJ.

•Outreach and Visibility: Find us on the web at www.shj.org. Use the resources of our partners: Hillel and CAJE. Read our articles at MyJewishLearning.com. Stay abreast of church/state issues through the Secular Coalition for America. Visit us at conferences: UJC’s General Assembly, Hillel, Harvard Humanists, and more. Use all our connections and enjoy.

We are Humanistic Jews. We are family. The Society is here for you. Even if you don’t have a question or a problem, call. We’d love to get to know you better.

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From Bonnie & Mark Cousens

to David Koppy & Family
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From Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Steve Mandell
For a speedy recovery
From SHJ
Bonnie & Mark Cousens
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To Judi & Allan Freund
In celebration of birth of granddaughters
From SHJ
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To Lee Spanier
In honor of his 85th birthday
From Lucie Brandon & Bert Steinberg

To Bertram Rothschild
In memory of his wife, Marilyn
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SHJ UPCOMING EVENTS

April 27-29, 2007	RABBI TOM HEYN VISIT TO OR EMET CONGREGATION, MINNEAPOLIS, MN. Contact: Margo Fox, (651) 699-6302, oremet@comcast.net.
April 27-29, 2007	IISHJ SEMINAR, "To Life! The Jewish Life Cycle," Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation, Highland Park, IL. Contact: (847) 347-3003, info@kolhadash.com.
May 3-6, 2007	SHJ BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING, Farmington Hills, MI. Contact: SHJ, (248) 478-7610, info@shj.org.
May 19-21, 2007	RABBI TOM HEYN VISIT TO KAHAL B'RAIRA, BOSTON, MA. Contact: Gladys Maged, (617) 628-3986, info@kahalbraira.org.
June 8-10, 2007	RABBI SHERWIN WINE VISIT TO ORANGE COUNTY SHJ, CA. Contact: Sheila Bass, (949) 206-9452, shekaba@aol.com.
September 12-14, 2007	RABBI SHERWIN WINE VISIT TO TRIANGLE CHJ, NC. Contact: Lois Alpern, (919) 493-4768, lalpern01@sprintpcs.com.
September 21-23, 2007	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO OR ADAM, PHOENIX, AZ. Contact: Dana Naimark, (480) 663-7788, info@oradam.org.
September 21-23, 2007	RABBI SHERWIN WINE VISIT TO ADAT CHAVERIM, LOS ANGELES, CA. Contact: Joan Waller, (818) 346-5152, jpwaller2@earthlink.net.
October 17-19, 2007	SHJ BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING. Contact: SHJ, (248) 478-7610, info@shj.org.
October 19-21, 2007	COLLOQUIUM '07, IISHJ, Farmington Hills, MI. Contact: IISHJ, (248) 476-9532, info@iishj.org.
October 26-28, 2007	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS, QUEENS CCJ, NY Contact: Ed Klein, (718) 380-5362, madrikh@peoplepc.com.
April 9-11, 2008	SHJ BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING. Contact: SHJ, (248) 478-7610, info@shj.org.
April 11-14, 2008	SHJ CONFERENCE & TEEN/YOUNG ADULT CONCLAVE '08. Contact: SHJ, (248) 478-7610, info@shj.org.

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