

Humanorah

the newsletter of the Society for Humanistic Judaism



Spring 2011

Vol. 33 No. 2

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BONNIE COUSENS

TOGETHER, ONCE AGAIN, WE SHALL OVERCOME

More than 48 years ago, eight families and a rabbi began an endeavor that we have inherited. Humanistic Judaism would provide them a meaningful Jewish identity while enabling them to remain true to their beliefs and humanistic values — dignity, equality, justice. As Humanistic Jews, they — and we — say what we believe and believe what we say.

We take action to make our world a just and better place for all. As an organization, we present a voice, defending our humanistic values. As individuals, we must be the activists, advocating for the rights that flow from these values.

Many of the freedoms and guarantees of dignity and equality that we have today were hardwon in the battles of the twentieth century. From women's rights to civil rights to gay rights, from workers' safety and security to choice, the rights and equality we now enjoy were won through battles, sit-ins, marches, and even deaths. And often members of the Jewish community was in the forefront of these struggles.

Many of our ancestors, immigrants from Eastern Europe in the early decades of the twentieth century, came here through Ellis Island and found jobs in the New York garment industry. There were no unions, no protections for workers. The workday was long, pay was low, working conditions were deplorable. And on March 25, 1911 — one hundred years ago — the unspeakable happened: the Asch Building, home of the Triangle Waist Company, caught fire. Workers found escape impossible: locked and blocked doors, fire doors that opened inward, a narrow fire escape that collapsed, fire ladders that could

not reach them. In just half an hour, 146 workers died, mostly young Jewish and Irish immigrant women, the sole breadwinners for their struggling families.

Henry Ford revolutionized manufacturing. Cars became more available, but the Ford workers had few protections. In April, 1937, the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the Wagner Act, guaranteeing workers the right to unionize. Leaders of the United Auto Workers (UAW), including Walter Reuther, on May 26, organized a leafletting campaign at the Ford Rouge complex — 100 leafletters, along with clergy, press and politicians gathered to inform more than 9,000 workers of the union efforts.

But in an event memorialized as the Battle of the Overpass, the leafletters were met by more than 400 Ford security guards at the Miller Road overpass. Union leaders and leafletters were beaten; at least one man died that day, others suffered permanent injuries, and a photo of beaten and bloodied UAW leaders Reuther, Dick Frankenstein, and others appeared around the world. Though sympathy and the National Labor Relations Board favored the workers, it was not until 1941 that Henry Ford signed a contract with the UAW, a contract that is said to be the most far-reaching auto contract ever signed.

Until the '60s, the U. S. was divided. Especially in the South, separate was the norm, from drinking fountains to lunch counters, housing to schools, and beyond. The Montgomery bus boycott, lunch-counter sit-ins in Selma, voter registration drives, all became weapons of the Civil Rights battle. On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which declared segregation illegal.

continued on page 13

SHJ AFFILIATES

ARIZONA
OR ADAM, CHJ

CALIFORNIA
ADAT CHAVERIM, VALLEY CHJ
KAHAL AM, SAN DIEGO
KOL HADASH, CHJ
ORANGE COUNTY SHJ
PACIFIC COMMUNITY OF CULTURAL JEWS

COLORADO
BETH AMI, COLORADO CHJ

CONNECTICUT
CHJ, FAIRFIELD COUNTY

D.C.
MACHAR, CSHJ

FLORIDA
CHJ, SARASOTA
CONGREGATION BETH ADAM
HUMANISTIC JEWISH HAVURAH, NAPLES

ILLINOIS
BETH CHAVERIM
KOL HADASH HUMANISTIC CONGREGATION

MASSACHUSETTS
KAHAL B'RAIRA, BOSTON CHJ

MICHIGAN
THE BIRMINGHAM TEMPLE

MINNESOTA
OR EMET, CHJ OF MINNESOTA

NEW JERSEY
CHJ OF MORRIS COUNTY

NEW YORK
BETH HASKALAH, ROCHESTER SHJ
THE CITY CONGREGATION
WESTCHESTER CHJ

NORTH CAROLINA
KOL HASKALAH

OHIO
HUMANIST JEWISH CHAVURAH, COLUMBUS

OREGON
KOL SHALOM, CHJ

WASHINGTON
SECULAR JEWISH CIRCLE OF PUGET SOUND

CANADA



BOCA'S BETH ADAM PARTICIPATES AT FEDSTOCK

FEDSTOCK: Two Days of Love and Nachas! Sponsored by the Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County, the Jewish community joined forces in a mission of *tikkun olam* through entertainment, food and activities. Congregation Beth Adam had two tables: one for sharing Humanistic Jewish philosophy and information about CBA, and one for children's activities and highlighting our school. [In the photograph above Irwin Cohn sits behind a banner quilted by his wife Joan.]

Another highlight for CBA arrived when we hosted with reform congregation L'Dor Va-Dor in Lake Worth a visit from Rabbi Adam Chalom, co-dean of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism. Together with Rabbi Barry Silver of that congregation and Mr. Gholam Rachman, an interfaith Muslim leader for peace and a columnist for the Palm Beach Post, Rabbi Chalom discussed the possibilities of Jews and Muslims coexisting in peace. An audience of approximately 100 people joined in with questions and comments. CBA looks for opportunities to present Humanistic Judaism to the public.

Report and photo by BJ Saul, Boca Raton, FL

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Humanorah

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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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Got EMAIL?

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

Notes From Around the Globe



CHJ, SARASOTA, STRIKES CHORDS WITH THE GREATER COMMUNITY

It was memorable! The third *bat mitzvah* in our history took place in January. Aimee Grab, in her acknowledgements, expressed, “Sim Lesser has not only been my [*bat mitzvah*] mentor, but my friend; so, although there weren’t any other kids around, I never felt lonely.” Amiee’s mother had been inspired by our first *bat mitzvah* in 1995 and decided then that Humanistic Judaism was meant for her family.

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism made itself visible in the community in other ways as well. We took a table at the heavily attended Gay Pride Day in downtown Sarasota. Our sign attracted many to come and ask us about Humanistic Judaism and remark that “this is exactly” what they had been looking for.

Yael Hirshfield, the associate director of Florida’s ADL, conducted a workshop on The Pyramid of Hate the day following her presentation at a CHJ service. “It starts with, what many think to be, an innocent joke, or poking fun at a specific groupand each next step is another to dehumanize, and then it gets easier and easier to continue until the final step is pure, cold hatred.” That final step ended up for Jews with the Holocaust.

Speaking at our *Kol Nidre* service was award-winning journalist and author Michael Hirsh. His latest book, *The Liberators*, is filled with interviews he conducted with the first GI’s to enter the concentration camps.

Rabbi Adam Chalom, co-dean of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, filled our meeting space from the very first night of his Scholar in Residence weekend. The topic “Jews and Muslims – Then and Now” could not have been more timely. The turnout for the Saturday and Sunday sessions set a new record. He made mention of the role that e-mails have played,

creating firestorms which have no basis; he asked the audience to check Snopes before forwarding inflammatory and baseless information. We are delighted that he will return in 2012.

The Humanaires, led by Dave Berman, graced our service with the Universalist Unitarians Chorus in what has become an annual reciprocal event. The joint choruses make beautiful music together. A few of our Humanaires sang with the Interfaith Chorus at the World Aids Day service presented by GAIN, the Gulfcoast Affirming Interfaith Network, of which CHJ is a member. GAIN will be presenting a “It Gets Better” service in May.

by Rick Stein, president, CHJ, Sarasota, FL

photo by Jules Altenburg shows former president Arlene Pearlman and current president Rick Stein at the Gay Pride Day, standing by their philosophy.



MEMBERS GIVE THEIR ALL TO OR EMET SCHOOL

Or Emet is building a wonderful, successful Jewish Cultural School program. A few key ingredients help:

First, Or Emet is a dedicated and highly generous community, with members who have continually been supportive of educating our children in a humanistic approach to Judaism (This tradition goes back many years to a time when the school had just a handful of students, meeting in members' homes). We are a volunteer organization and everyone helps out.

Second, we have a terrific group of dedicated teachers. Our teachers: Sarah Berman-Young, Ellen Chazdon, Muriel Sterne, and Eva Cohen are all members of Or Emet; Eva was one of the very first students from our Jewish Cultural School to

celebrate a humanistic *bat mitzvah*. Now, with 20 students, we have formed four groups: a preK-K "Littles" program; a grades 1-3 "Middles" class; a grades 4-*bar/bat mitzvah* "Juniors" program; and a brand new "teen crew" that we just started this year. The teachers present a creative and engaging curriculum to help students understand our way of practicing Judaism.

Third—and I think this is our special sauce—we offer an adult program to run concurrently with the monthly school program. As some of our families drive from 20-30 miles away to our school (which is hosted at a local Quaker school), this program offers an opportunity for the parents and other members of Or Emet to learn about different aspects of Humanism and its relationship to Judaism, while waiting for their

youngsters. We attract terrific speakers from within our congregation and from the Twin Cities community.

Or Emet and its members host a number of student-centered events around the holidays, among them a *Sukkot* celebration (seen in the last newsletter), a *Hanukka* party, a *Tu B' Shevat seder*, a *Purim* party, and students also have a role in our community *Passover seder*. Our *Hanukka* party, this year, attracted more than 100 people — no small feat given that the party was held just days after a huge snowstorm.

To learn more about our congregation or our school, please visit www.oremnet.org. We also have set up a special website for the school at oremnet.wordpress.com, which includes summaries of past lessons.
by Lisa Gardner-Springer, school coordinator, MN

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

Help us raise funds by
shopping through our
marketplace.

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

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

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

COLORADO CONGREGATION USES PERFORMANCE-BASED LEARNING

“Research shows no one learns better than those who have to teach what they’ve learned to others.”

In the SHJ manual, “Performance Based Learning,” Harriet Maza et al promote this practice because it’s fun, creative, raises self-esteem, and “reinforces newly acquired knowledge and humanistic skills.”

Beth Ami, the Colorado Congregation for Humanistic Judaism’s Jewish Cultural School is studying Humanistic Judaism as a year-long topic. Our theme is dignity, the power and responsibility to shape our own lives independent of supernatural authority. Lenore Kingston, JCS director and mitzvah teacher; Marti Hirsch, art and music director and upper elementary teacher; and Christie Gosch, early childhood teacher collaborated to create our performance-based curriculum. Our goals are to learn:

1. The History of our Humanistic Jewish Movement
2. Jewish holiday celebrations through the lens of a Humanistic Jew
3. Humanistic blessings and songs
4. That a *mentsch* is a person who practices his or her values in everyday life

L’DOR V’DOR BECOMES FOCUS FOR KOL HASKALAH SCHOOL

During the month of February, the Kol Haskalah Sunday School focused on “L’Dor V’Dor—Learning from Grandparents and Other Generations.” The purpose was to bring together all the generations within our congregation and realize how much there is to learn from those who have come before us.

Our special events during the month included a Jewish hero/heroine dramatization for the older children. Our adult members dressed and spoke as their favorite Jewish hero or heroine and gave a five-minute autobiographical monologue sharing the life and achievements of the character, followed by a question and answer session.

Other events for our younger children included story time with grandparents and older members, baking, eating and



During first semester, we celebrated *Shabbat* and holidays and led humanistic services in a senior facility with Jewish Family Services. We discussed evolution during high holidays, water stewardship during *Tashlich*, Jewish heroes during *Sukkot*, Jewish humor during *Shabbat* and our hero, Rabbi Sherwin Wine at *Hanukka* time.

We concluded the first semester performing a play by Michael and Marti Hirsch called “A Rabbi Finds His Home.” It describes Rabbi Wine’s journey to Humanistic Judaism. The school presented it for SHJ Rabbi Miriam Jerris on the occasion of her community visit to Colorado. We learned that Rabbi Wine was indeed a *mentsch*.

by Lenore Kingston, school director, Beth Ami, Colorado

learning about *halla* and other Jewish food, and enjoying Jewish music and dancing.

For the adult members of the congregation, Cathy Moore, our programming chair and past president, has assembled a rich array of cultural and educational events. From a discussion of the death penalty and other ethics, the environment and interfaith interpretations of God, to a poetry *Shabbat*, to programs on Jewish humor, and the electronic music of one of our members, our congregation and friends have listened, learned and laughed together—once again, supporting our goal of building community through shared interests and activities.

Kol Haskalah is also planning its 10th anniversary celebration in late spring, and we look forward to sharing pictures and details of that party after the event!

by Allison Wood, co-president, Kol Haskalah, NC

photo of Gene Telser by wife Phoebe



KOL SHALOM TALKS HUMANISTIC JUDAISM AND "WALKS THE WALK"

Kol Shalom is a major actor in the Portland community. We belong to Oregonians for an Alternative to the Death Penalty and Martin Heisler, our delegate to the Jewish Federation's Community Relations Committee, brought up the issue there and persuaded them to ally with OADP also (former delegate Gary Sampson had initially introduced the idea). Kol Shalom member Naseem Rakha wrote a novel that's been well received and translated into other languages: *The Crying Tree*, a moving protest against the death penalty.

We continue to be a constituent member of the Metropolitan Alliance for the Common Good (MACG), and our community involvement also includes partnership with two other liberal Jewish congregations for ownership and management of a Jewish cemetery (part of a larger cemetery) which will allow for burial of non-Jewish spouses or partners and for cremains. Nineteen members already plan to buy plots, and we offer the service to new members who join us.

We've had several public information meetings at area libraries, with people dropping in to learn about us, a lot of inquiries from our website, and "get-acquainted socials" where we show the Wine-Hellman interview (now on DVD) for prospective members. A highlight was our weekend visit from Rabbi Ben Biber, a benefit to us of SHJ affiliation. He spoke on "Naturalistic Spirituality," Friday evening, and the Israeli/Palestinian issue, Saturday, packing the house with guests and members for both events. On Sunday, he met with our board and responded, helpfully, to our concerns.

There's been much good participation on the part of members, and holiday celebrations are well-attended with "newbies" coming to both. The *Hanukka* party was planned and executed by parents of the Sunday School kids, who were beyond cute in their play. The parents were then asked to put together the *Purim* party as well.

Member Mary Raskin is enrolled in the IISHJ Leadership Program. She is our ritual director. She and her committee plan and lead *Shabbat* and other celebrations. She'll also play a central role in the *b'nai mitzvah* of three of our students this spring.

Jane Goldhamer, SHJ board designee, Portland, OR

KAHAL AM MEMBERS SHARE EXPERIENCES AND EXPERTISE

Kahal Am, the Humanistic Jewish Community of San Diego, has enjoyed learning about the expertise of its members in a variety of programs over the past six months. All we had to do was ask, and the answer was yes, yes, yes.

During one *Shabbat* program, former professional football referee Gene Telser presented a range of biographies on Jewish sports figures. He noted that we can celebrate the achievement of Jews in an area not traditionally thought of—in athletics. Another month, Jeff Simon narrated a videotaped interview of his Greek grandparents telling about their experiences during the Holocaust. It was fascinating to hear of their forced journey from Greece to the camps in Eastern Europe, then eventually to the United States. We enjoyed an *oneg* of traditionally Sephardic foods afterwards.

At another *Shabbat*, Gary Zarnow and Esther Singer read a play with an ethical dilemma but without an ending. This experience generated a deep discussion about the Holocaust and forgiveness, lasting beyond the allotted time for the *oneg*. Over the years we have learned from our members about their personal aspirations as writers and other types of artists and their residency in other countries. We hope to encourage more members to share their passions or expertise in the future. We really enjoy it.

by Beverly Zarnow, madrikha

"OUR MAN IN WASHINGTON" SPEAKS IN ORANGE COUNTY

California's Orange County Society for Humanistic Judaism meets weekly. Our attendance is bolstered by members of the Laguna Woods Village community as our scintillating programs continue to draw in nonmembers to the congregation. Recently we had speakers on identity theft, Jewish humor, and a museum docent speaking about the "Queen of Sheba." One Sunday we packed the house with a *klezmer* concert. More than 100 attended in spite of a California, infamous rainstorm. About twice a year we have speakers from the Jewish Federation on programs of special interest to us: specifically, the Muslim-Jewish issues at the University of California in Irvine, a close neighbor.

In February, as a benefit of our SHJ affiliation, we enjoyed a weekend visit from Rabbi Binyamin Biber of Machar, our Washington, D.C. congregation. We advertised Rabbi Biber as "Our Man in Washington." Fifty-five members attended a *shabbat* dinner in his honor and discussed multicultural/interfaith relationships. The following Saturday, we held an all-day conference open to everyone in the Southern California areas. The programs were interactive and 60 people attended including members of Kohal Am, San Diego; and Adat Chaverim from the Los Angeles area. On Sunday, we held a question and answer session. Rabbi Ben brought fresh insight to our aging community.



From top: Sheila Bass, SHJ board designee; Judy Mandel, president; Rabbi Binyamin Biber

We have had a very successful winter film festival running from January through April. We show films with Jewish content and poignant plots. This is another way to entice the general community from Laguna Woods Village to attend our events. For information on our films write to Judy Mandel, mandelj101@yahoo.com.

by Judy Mandel, president, Orange County, SHJ, CA

FOUR GENERATIONS OF A FAMILY PURSUE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

When Max Courval, son of Gary Courval and Karen Silverberg Courval, celebrated his *bar mitzvah*, last fall at Or Adam in Phoenix, he became the fourth generation in his family to commit to Humanistic Judaism.

Max's mother, Karen, who grew up at the Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills, Michigan along with a sister and brother, was part of the third generation in the family; their parents Dale Silverberg and Lynne Master composed the second generation; and Theodora Smokler, Lynne's step-mother was the founder of it all.

Speaking of founders, it was here in Sunday school at the Birmingham Temple where mother Karen became close friends with Dana Wolfe Naimark, co-founder (with husband Rick) of Or Adam in Phoenix and ultimately,

the person who would tutor Max and lead his service. Karen is the daughter of Stanley and Paula Wolfe, still active members at the Birmingham Temple.

Grandmother Lynne Master, who wrote the service for her grandson, is a former president of the Birmingham Temple and is currently the president of the board of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism.

For a *bar mitzvah* gift, she will be taking Max on a trip to Scandanavia to understand even more about his *bar mitzvah* hero, Niels Bohr, the physicist who saved Einstein and Fermi from the Nazis.

by Harriet Maza, *Humanorah* editor, Farmington Hills, MI

IT'S A GO! GO! GO! AS THE NEW STRATEGIC PLAN MOVES INTO ACTION

It is with great excitement, enthusiasm and pleasure that I report that the new Strategic Plan has been approved by the SHJ Board of Directors.

After two years of diligent effort, dedication and a commitment to making this plan representative of the needs of our affiliates and their members, the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) has finally completed the work. Engaging a professional demographer to conduct focus groups and a mail-in survey, we were able to determine the kind of support and assistance members most wanted from the Society: items such as programming, events, education, outreach, and increased use of technology were foremost.

Now the board will begin implementation of the exciting and innovative initiatives contained in our new Strategic Plan. SHJ committees have been given responsibility for developing programs to complete the action items

that will enable us to begin meeting our goals over the next five years.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the members of the Strategic Planning Committee (AJ Chalom, Marlene Cohen, Mark Ellyne, Judi Gladstone, Lou Altman), the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors for their time and effort in the development of our new Strategic Plan. The response of so many SHJ individuals to the survey has made this plan truly representative of the Society's membership. With your continued dedication and cooperation, Secular Humanistic Judaism has a bright future. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

It has been my privilege to serve as the chairperson of the Strategic Planning Committee and participate in the development of the Plan. I, like you, look forward to its implementation.

Faith Oremland, chair

THE SHJ STRATEGIC PLAN 2011

MISSION STATEMENT

The Society for Humanistic Judaism mobilizes people to celebrate Jewish identity and culture consistent with a humanistic philosophy of life, independent of supernatural authority. As the central body for the Humanistic Jewish Movement in North America, the Society assists in organizing new communities, supporting its member communities and providing a voice for Humanistic Jews.

VISION STATEMENT

We will increase visibility of the Society for Humanistic Judaism and create opportunities for increased involvement in the philosophy and practice of Humanistic Judaism in North America. We will advance dynamic, engaging and sustainable Humanistic Jewish communities.

OUTCOME 1: ENSURING FINANCIAL STABILITY

INTERNAL STRATEGIES

1.1 Create and implement a well-rounded development strategy that includes an annual campaign, endowment funds, increased planned giving, grants, and diverse fund-raising opportunities.

- 1.2 Increase member participation in providing for the financial stability of the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ).
- 1.3 Maintain sound financial practices including budgeting, forecasting, and reviewing our financial planning and investment strategies.

YEAR ONE ACTION ITEMS

- 1. Obtain approval for new assessment protocol.
- 2. Continue moving cash into/out of growth accounts.
- 3. Continue conducting annual audit.
- 4. Continue budgeting with year-end totals.
- 5. Continue taking into account new and completed projects.
- 6. Continue participation in Combined Federal Campaign through Jewish Charities of America.
- 7. Increase planned giving and promote Pooled Income Fund.
- 8. Attain 100% Board Member donor participation.
- 9. Conduct annual campaign.
- 10. Conduct Board Member Phonathon.
- 11. Continue Board-approved investment policy.
- 12. Rotate responsibility of treasurer and exercise oversight

THE SHJ STRATEGIC PLAN 2011

continued from page 8

OUTCOME 2: SUPPORTING DYNAMIC, ENGAGING, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OF VARIOUS MODELS

INTERNAL STRATEGIES

- 2.1 Provide resources and support suitable for communities that represent different models.
- 2.2 Develop innovative programs to support the development of new communities.

YEAR ONE ACTION ITEMS

1. Create an e-newsletter.
2. Improve electronic support through increase use and publicity of Grovesite.
3. Create adult ed. programming materials for communities.
4. Create youth ed. programming materials for communities.
5. Develop and improve youth programming and education: create curriculum framework adaptable for different models, e.g., monthly, weekly schools; and create a model for engaging youth around Humanistic Jewish values.

OUTCOME 3: INCREASING OUTREACH AND VISIBILITY

INTERNAL STRATEGIES

- 3.1 Develop new and innovative messages.
- 3.2 Maximize internet opportunities to increase visibility of Humanistic Judaism, SHJ, and affiliated communities.
- 3.3 Creatively utilize media sources like op-ed, letters to the editor and story ideas.
- 3.4 Seek involvement in Jewish, humanist and interfaith communities to broaden our awareness and reach Humanistic Jews within these communities.

YEAR ONE ACTION ITEMS

1. Make easy changes for better website accessibility.
2. Complete HuJews website.
3. Prepare Values in Action Campaign: adjust website to show (pictures) of HJ people expressing what Humanistic Jews believe and affirm through action. Distribute to affiliates to use.
4. The Executive Committee creates a technology committee to evaluate the benefits of new technology, new design and

OUTCOME 4: ENHANCING RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE SHJ AND AMONG ITS MEMBERS AND AFFILIATED COMMUNITIES

INTERNAL STRATEGIES

- 4.1 Expand opportunities for networking and sharing resources between members and between communities.
- 4.2 Establish strong relationships between leadership and membership of affiliated communities, our at-large member community, board members, executive committee members and the SHJ staff.
- 4.3 Create a culture where Humanistic Jews understand and accept that all Humanistic Jewish communities do not look the same.
- 4.4 Promote a sense of pride and understanding of the importance of being part of the Humanistic Jewish movement.

YEAR ONE ACTION ITEMS

1. Push out information to communities and members-at-large through technology to create "A BUZZ."
2. Get information about communities to each other via online tools (for example, communities send letters of congratulations to other communities on anniversaries, etc. Share what's working, what's not working, accomplishments).
3. Promote awareness and value of the SHJ to affiliates.
4. Develop "Sister Communities" program.

OUTCOME 5: CULTIVATING KNOWLEDGEABLE LEADERSHIP

INTERNAL STRATEGIES

- 5.1 Create training opportunities and educational resources with an emphasis on using current technology to support and enhance strong leadership at all levels within Humanistic Judaism.
- 5.2 Identify strong leaders of all ages to work within the affiliated communities and the SHJ.
- 5.3 Recruit professional leadership such as *rabbis*, *madrikhim*, educators, music directors, administrators.

YEAR ONE ACTION ITEMS

1. Publicize and promote existing resources.
2. Add to the annual report from communities to the Society Board request for materials for sharing.
3. Review the annual community report from each year to determine what requests for information should be added to it such as types of governance models.
4. Encourage all communities to send a designee to the SHJ Board.
5. Develop leadership training for affiliate boards, using regional conferences and/or webinars for those who cannot attend a conference.

WINTER WEEKEND GETAWAY, ALWAYS A HIGHLIGHT FOR KAHAL B'RAIRA MEMBERS

Once again Kahal B'raira has had a full fall of activities made possible by the efforts of our all-volunteer membership and our hard-working staff. One of our favorite highlights comes at the end of the busy holiday season, when KB gets away for a winter weekend in the hills of New Hampshire.

Those who attend know that this is no *retreat* in the usual sense of the term. We don't have organized workshops or seminars. Yes, we have a dedicated Social Action Committee, leading, for example, many efforts such as aiding local farms and food banks. We also organize wonderful events like the Rabbi Chalom weekend seminar back in Cambridge. But for the Winter Weekend Getaway, we give ourselves a chance to relax with family and friends, skate, ski, snowshoe, tube or just sit by the fireplace and read or talk. And let's not forget the outlet shopping!

A highlight from this year was the scene in the lounge on a Saturday night when about 50 KB members gathered around six or seven tables, each table featuring a different card or board game. Everyone from young children up through adults played and enjoyed each other's company for hours.

This is strictly a *no business*, community-building event. We find that many generations are able to mingle freely and that our retention rate among attendees is significantly higher than otherwise. Hats off to the organizers Jackie Liederman and Ellen Richstone for this wonderful annual event!

by Gladys Maged, and SHJ designee Jon Levine, Boston

photo of Naomi Forman-Katz (l) and Chloe Meadow



Participants walk the Loop to visit Jewish artists.

CELEBRATION OF JEWISH CULTURE, HUMANIST THOUGHT HOSTED BY BETH CHAVERIM

Inspired by the Chicago Humanities Festival in which much programming is done in a short period of time with a single unifying theme, Beth Chaverim hosted "A Celebration of Jewish Culture and Humanist Thought" over a ten day period in October. We received two grants from the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the Community Foundation for Jewish Education to help underwrite the series. Included in the series was a cooking demonstration by renowned chef Gale Gand; a dramatization of the Walter Isaacson book, *Einstein*; a lecture on "Celebrating Life in the Bible" by scholar Rachel Dulin; a walking tour of Jewish artists on display in the Chicago Loop; and a lecture entitled "Judaism Without Apologies" by author and columnist Neil Steinberg.

by Linda Horn, administrator, Beth Chaverim, IL

MACHAR MADRIKH SPEAKS AT MUSLIM LEADERSHIP RETREAT

In August, Machar's *madrikh*, Michael Prival, spoke to a leadership retreat of Muslims for Progressive Values in Atlanta about practical issues involved in organizing communities such as ours. On January 30, Daayiee Abdullah, who has been featured in the media as an openly gay *imam*, spoke at Machar about Islam and homosexuality. We look forward to continuing our warm and productive relationship with Muslims for Progressive Values.

by Michael Prival, Machar, CSHJ, Washinton, D.C.

Building Community

WHY I AM JEWISH BY RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS

I maintain that I am Jewish today and active in the Jewish community because of the experiences I had as a child and teen.

I grew up in a small town in Ontario with a Jewish community of less than 1,000 families. When I was born, there was one denominational option, Orthodox Judaism. When I was five (yes, five), my parents sent me to a Jewish sleepover camp in Michigan. I loved camping so much that I spent every summer from the time I was five until I was sixteen at a Jewish summer camp. At 13, I became eligible to join B'nai B'rith Girls (BBG). BBG was the Jewish social experience for Jewish teens in Windsor. Our B'nai B'rith region consisted of our chapters in Canada and Michigan minus Detroit. In BBG, I discovered opportunities to meet other Jewish teens from all over Michigan, and the weekend conclaves created a strong and enduring bond to those friends.

Both these experiences ignited my love for music, and so many of the songs we sang were connected to being Jewish. Music is still a compelling connection to my Jewish identity. When I travel from one community to another and teach the songs that I love and then hear the same songs sung in other Humanistic congregations, I feel at home with my sisters and brothers.

Today, when seeking meaningful Jewish experience, I am often drawn back to the memories of summer *Shabbats*, dressed all in white, gazing out at the lake at sunset. It wasn't just the "scene" that endured it was my attachment to a certain kind of *Shabbat* feeling. And my desire to recreate that feeling, albeit through different experiences, has followed me into adulthood.

The B'nai B'rith experience for me was about stretching my leadership muscles. I wanted to be part of the group and found that when I volunteered and worked on a project, I developed strong relationships with some really awesome people. These personal connections and relationships were created in a Jewish context, and that emotional memory stuck.

I often tell parents who are members of a Humanistic Jewish community how much I admire them. They have made an important decision to introduce their children to Jewish culture in a community that affirms their humanistic beliefs and



values. I call this ethical parenting, and I applaud all of you who have made that sometime very difficult choice. The Humanistic Jewish movement is small. There are many programs that we would like to offer and can't. We do, however, offer an annual Youth and Young Adult Conclave that is spectacular. I have watched many of the young people who attended the conclaves of the Society for Humanistic Judaism stay connected and dedicated to Humanistic Judaism as adults. As parents, we ought not to abandon our ethical parenting when our children turn 13. We can continue providing them with wonderful Humanistic Jewish experiences after their *bar/bat mitzvah* through college.

I am writing this prior to the 2011 Youth Conclave. You will probably read it after a very wonderful conclave held the last weekend in March. But don't worry, you can send your kids next year, and they will be welcomed with open arms and have an experience they will remember when they are deciding what values and experiences they want to transmit to their children.

I am forever grateful to my parents for my strong connection to my Jewish identity. I doubt they knew how important it would be in and to my life, but I knew when I was a parent how important it was, and so do you.

**MAZEL TOV TO KOL HASKALAH ON THEIR
FORTHCOMING 10TH ANNIVERSARY**

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 holiday gifts, each with a sweet treat associated with the holiday, 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

ENSURE A VIBRANT HUMANISTIC JUDAISM FOR YEARS TO COME WITH A PLANNED GIFT

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. The SHJ’s annuity, the Pooled Income Fund, provides an added unique benefit. You can designate a portion of

your gift for your local SHJ community. You will receive an income of about five percent for as long as you and your spouse live, and after both deaths the proceeds can go to work at the national and local levels to expand our activities and strengthen and grow our Humanistic Jewish Movement.

The extension of the Bush tax cuts has provided an additional benefit for those who are 70½ or older: you can make a tax-free distribution from your Individual Retirement Account to the Society for Humanistic Judaism in 2011 and 2012.

To learn more about including the Society in your estate plan, kindly e-mail bonniecousens@shj.org or phone 248-478-7610.

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 \$236 \$360 \$1,036 \$1,360

\$150 \$250 \$536 \$1,836 Other \$ _____

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TOGETHER, ONCE AGAIN, WE SHALL OVERCOME... A MESSAGE FROM BONNIE COUSENS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In March 1965, three marches from Selma to Montgomery marked a turning point. State troopers beat and tear-gassed the marchers. Media coverage of the first march — Bloody Sunday — followed by the death of Rev. Reeb, a white UU minister beaten in the second march, brought more than 8,000 marchers to the third march: whites and blacks, celebrities and working people, young and old, marching arm in arm. The images of state brutality juxtaposed with images of unity produced change. Signing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, President Johnson said, “Their cause must be our cause . . . it is all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome.”

We continue to fight for a woman’s right to choose. Back alley abortions were once the only option women had for terminating a pregnancy. Then on January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court, in *Roe v. Wade*, ruled that abortion was protected as a fundamental right under the constitution. Gradually, those who oppose choice have chipped away at this right, threatening the safety and well-being of families, until today, the purse strings are being used to prevent funding of family planning.

The freedoms and protections we cherish are written in blood. But the battles continue. Attempts to limit funding for family planning (choice) and health care are being incorporated into the Federal budget. Unions are being stripped of collective bargaining rights. Worker safety and security is being threatened. The middle class is disappearing. The distinction between legal and illegal aliens is blurred. Homosexuals are denied the rights to marry the person they love. As Humanists, these battles are our battles. If we believe in equality, in preserving dignity for all, in maintaining a good quality of life, our values dictate that we become involved. As individuals, we can write letters, join protest marches and rallies, sign petitions, donate to the cause — we can make our voice heard: together, to borrow a phrase from the ’60s, we shall overcome!



Bonnie

SECULAR COALITION OF AMERICA ANNOUNCES SUMMIT

The Secular Coalition for America’s Biennial Strategic Summit, to be held May 19-21 in Washington, D.C., is “your chance to to have a genuine impact on the future of the Secular Humanistic movement as we work to bring reason into (and take religious bias out of) government. This is a one-of-a-kind participatory meeting of leaders, activists, and thinkers, all from within our secular movement. You will collaborate, network, and strategize with them to improve our Secular Decade plan.” The mission of the Secular Decade plan is “to realize a more rational and secular America, and to raise secular Americans to their rightful national leadership role.”

Among the featured speakers will be Sally Quinn, editor of *The Washington Post’s* well-renowned “On Faith” blog, and Arizona state Senator Kyrsten Sinema, recently highlighted by *TIME* magazine as one its “40 under 40” young rising stars in American politics.

The Society for Humanistic Judaism is one of ten member organizations making up the SCA. Also included are the American Atheists, the American Ethical Union, the American Humanist Association, the Atheist Alliance International, Camp Quest, Council for Secular Humanism, Institute for Humanist Studies, Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, and the Secular Student Alliance.

Please join SHJ Executive Director Bonnie Cousens, President Lou Altman and Deb Godden from Machar CSHJ in Washington, D.C. in May to make your voices heard too.

You can learn more about the Summit and support the work of SCA at www.secular.org.— and be sure to let SCA know of your SHJ connection.

SHJ President Lou Altman discusses billboard campaign

You have probably heard about the billboards recently put up by the Coalition of Reason (a number of SHJ affiliates are active in their local CoR organizations), American Humanist Association, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the American Atheists and other organizations, all of which expound variations of the theme that it's OK not to believe in god, and that lots of others feel the same way.

How do people react to these campaigns? Some positive, some negative, no doubt. But one particular reaction that caught my attention was mixed: a newspaper columnist in Ohio defended the right to criticize theistic religion publicly, no matter how unpopular such opinions might be, but she also complained that 1) it was "mean" of the non-believers to mock other peoples' beliefs, and 2) the non-believers should not be "recruiting."

How should non-theistic Jews react to those two criticisms? Here's my personal answer: I agree with the lady in Ohio that we should neither mock nor recruit, but I do not concede that we have done either.

I agree that it is not appropriate for humanists to mock religious belief. In fact, to do so is contrary to the basic humanist principle that all people should be treated with dignity and in accordance with their needs. Some people need their gods. It's their choice.

Furthermore, such mockery feeds the negative stereotype that some religious people have of non-believers as arrogant and smug. So from a public relations viewpoint, non-believers do themselves no favor by being smart-asses. We have our point of view; let others have theirs.

But without mockery, it is fair to say that some religious teachings and practices are just plain bad for mankind. For example: a total ban on abortion and contraception; male domination; sexual repression; rejection of human evolution; government sponsorship of prayer in public schools and government functions; religious discrimination in hiring for governmental faith-based initiatives; withholding of blood transfusions and other medical procedures on

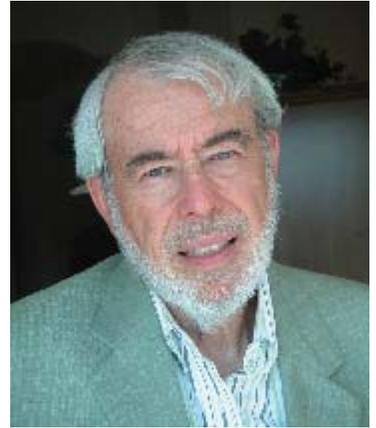
religious grounds; and the list goes on.

Those who believe in evidence-based decision-making in government, education and medicine must have the right to criticize religion's shortcomings in these areas, and it is not legitimate to reject such criticism on the ground that it offends someone's religious sensibilities. A person's right to practice the religion of his or her choice ends where it encroaches on my well-being.

The atheist and humanist publicity campaigns also have several other purposes. One is to let nonbelievers know that they are not alone. SHJ affiliates involved in their local Coalition of Reason have received e-mails from non-theistic Jews who are excited to discover a community that supports their Jewish identity. And the American Humanist Association frequently receives mail from isolated nonbelievers living in the Bible Belt who say they are greatly relieved to discover that they are not freaks, that there are many others who feel the same way. How did they discover that they are not alone? In many cases, it's from one of those billboards.

Another purpose is to educate the general population that nonbelievers are not bereft of ethics; that there is more than one route to the golden rule. And I think that people of ethics need to cooperate with each other, regardless of whether they get those ethics from heaven or earth.

Finally, the godless advertisement campaigns are not intended to "recruit." The purpose is not to persuade anyone who believes in a god that they should give up their belief. That is not for us to judge. Everyone deserves freedom of choice. In fact, the "recruiting" criticism can be turned around. I am not sure that a majority of believers, Jewish and otherwise, grant to the non-believers the same freedom they claim for themselves; they think we have SOME NERVE refusing to go along with the religious consensus. So another purpose of the publicity campaigns is to remind the majority that their insistence on uniformity is arrogant and smug. Perhaps, therefore, we can be forgiven for sometimes replying in kind.



Thank You for Thinking of SHJ

To Alma & Larry Spickler
In memory of your sister, Gloria Fogel
From Miriam Jerris & Stephen Stawicki

To Shari & Richard Gelber
In honor of the birth of your grandson,
Sol Chan Gelber
From The Society for Humanistic Judaism
Bonnie & Mark Cousens
Miriam Jerris & Stephen Stawicki.
Adam Chalom

To Susan Hoffman
In memory of your mother, Regina Feuer
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Judy Nave
Get well soon
From Miriam Jerris & Stephen Stawicki

To Doug and Karol Ross
In memory of your father, Victor Ross
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Karen Burk
In memory of your mother
From Miriam Jerris & Stephen Stawicki.

To Alan Gittelsohn
In memory of your wife, Sharon
From Lucia Brandon & Bert Steinberg

To Joan & Steve Aufrecht
Welcome to our family
Bonnie & Mark Cousens

Support Humanistic Judaism,
remember a loved one.
SHJ Tributes
for every occasion provide the pro-
grams we need:

Sherwin Wine Group Development Fund
Miriam Jerris Development Fund
Bass Community Development Fund
Bess & Boaz Siegel Jewish Culture Fund
Pivnick Family Rabbinic Fund
SHJ College Havura Program
HuJews Youth Programs
Publications
Public Relations
Youth Scholarship Fund
Endowment Fund

To Adam & AJ Chalom
In honor of their visit upon the death of
Milda Dreifus
From Karen & Frank Burk

To Rabbi Adam Chalom
In honor of his visit to Chautauqua
last summer
From Margery & Richard Buxbaum

To Sy Schnuer
Get well soon
From The Society for Humanistic Judaism
Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Janice & Rex Rosenhaus
In memory of your father,
Mel Rosenhaus
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens
Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To Judy & Gerry Primak
Congratulations on your Grandson's
Bar Mitzvah
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Anne Shonbrun & Alan Siegel
Congratulations on your daughter
Carley's Bat Mitzvah
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Shari & Richard Gelber
In gratitude for their
generous hospitality
From Adam Chalom

To Jeanette Katzman
In memory of your husband,
Barney Katzman
From Gary Vandeputte

To Ann Black
In honor of her special birthday
From Marlene Cohen
Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Arnie D'Amore-Braver
Get well soon
From The Society for Humanistic Judaism
Bonnie & Mark Cousens

Honor the Passages of Life

A tribute lets friends know you care.

YES! I would like to purchase an SHJ Tribute for a
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for a donation of _____. (minimum \$25 US)

Please allocate tribute to: _____
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Return to: SHJ, 28611 W. 12 Mile Rd.
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Please Print TO: _____
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_____ **in memory / honor (circle one)**

of _____

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SHJ UPCOMING EVENTS

March 25-27, 2011	HUJEWS TEEN & COLLEGE CONCLAVE 2011, "What Can You Do, HuJews? Tikkun Olam & Humanistic Judaism," Chicago, IL. Contact: SHJ, (248) 478-7610, info@shj.org or info@hujews.org.
April 9, 2011	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS at SHJ NORTH EAST REGIONAL MEETING, White Plains, NY. Contact: irkleiman@verizon.net.
April 10, 2011	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO BALTIMORE JEWISH CULTURAL CHAVURAH, MD. Contact: Bob Jacobson, bobboj@aol.com.
May 19-22, 2011	SECULAR COALITION FOR AMERICA BIENNIAL STRATEGIC SUMMIT, Washington, D.C. Contact: www.secular.org.
September 28-October 2, 2011	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS ROSH HASHANA VISIT TO ADAT CHAVERIM, Los Angeles, CA. Contact: info@HumanisticJudaismLA.org.
October 7-8, 2011	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS YOM KIPPUR VISIT TO KOL HASKALAH, A HUMANISTIC JEWISH CONGREGATION, Triangle, NC. Contact: info@kolhaskalah.org, (919) 968-7888.
February 17-19, 2012	RABBI BINYAMIN BIBER FIELD VISIT TO KAHAL AM, San Diego, CA. Contact: Gary Zarnow, gzarnow@gmail.com.

HUMANISTIC JUDAISM'S FIRST TRI-STATE GET TOGETHER: SATURDAY APRIL 9

A great opportunity to celebrate with kindred spirits:

join members from HJ Communities in Westchester, New York City, Connecticut, and New Jersey.

Members of other Humanistic Jewish congregations welcome too.

Locale: Westchester CHJ's meeting spot, convenient to the Hutchison River Parkway & a short cab ride from Metro North's Harrison Train Station.

More info: Cary Shaw (caryshaw@optonline).

USE GOODSEARCH AND SUPPORT THE SOCIETY FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

Remember, if you use www.goodsearch.com as your search engine, you can earn money for SHJ. Type in the key words **Humanistic Judaism** into the "I support" box and click "verify." The SHJ's full title will appear. Then search the Web for whatever you need just as you would with any search engine. Every time you do this, you earn money for SHJ. We've already received numerous checks. Thank you, SEARCHERS!