

Humanorah

the newsletter of the Society for Humanistic Judaism



Fall-Winter 2016

Vol. 38 No. 1

INTRODUCING PAUL GOLIN, SHJ'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Paul Golin, the Society's new executive director, brings us nearly two decades of helping Jewish organizations and movements understand the key trends affecting North American Jewry on engaging more intermarried households; growing the participating community through "Public Space Judaism" programs; and "outreach marketing." On the board of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, he spoke at IISHJ Colloquia in 2012 and 2014. As associate executive director of Big Tent Judaism/Jewish Outreach Institute, he worked on reaching out to unaffiliated Jewish families with an emphasis on engaging intermarried households. Before this, Paul was program associate for information technology at the Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life. He has a background in media. Paul is the white Ashkenazi half of a "Jewpanese" (Jewish/Japanese) Jewish multiracial household. He maintains the Jewpanese page on Facebook and tweets at @paulgolin. We recently began what I hope will be an on-going conversation.

Deb Godden - I understand that your two major areas of focus will be development/fundraising and marketing the Society to create both more visibility, and more members and communities. What's the balance?

Paul Golin - The two pillars overlap so much that I can't imagine doing one without the other. To create the kind of marketing, programming, and creative materials that will raise our movement's profile, we need more financial resources. And, we can't expect to engage more donors and new members if we're not clearly communicating our mission and articulating how our activities align with their own philanthropic goals.

One word is emblazoned in my mind from the start: growth. I want to be a resource to help grow membership in the local communities, which will in turn demonstrate an increased value to SHJ affiliation. I also want to grow SHJ's direct donor base through issue-based campaigns and programs. I want to grow our online presence, web traffic, and media exposure.



I think about a deeper, harder kind of growth, and that is personal growth, mission growth, growth in meaning and impact. What is the positive change we're trying to make in the world? Does Secular Humanistic Judaism improve people's lives, or help people improve the world? I'm not interested in maintaining institutions for their own sake. Humanistic Judaism is a cause. We're on a mission. How do we describe it?

How do we engage more? I can't answer those questions alone (as tempting as it is for some people to claim, "I alone can fix it!"), but I can facilitate a movement-wide conversation that will.

DG - We are in the early years (my opinion) of deep change that has been a long time coming. The recent SHJ Vision Report is only a beginning. Does it contain the elements needed for change?

PG - Yes, we're in a time of transition, not just our movement but American Jewry in general. I was heartened by the Vision Report for two main reasons. First, it takes a clear-eyed approach to opportunities and challenges. Denominational Judaism is not a growth industry for any Jewish denomination (except the one averaging six kids per couple),

**A GOOD NEW YEAR TO
ALL SHJ AFFILIATES
AND MEMBERS!
L'SHANA TOVA!**

SHJ AFFILIATES

ARIZONA

[OR Adam CHJ](#)

[SECULAR HUMANIST JEWISH CIRCLE](#)

CALIFORNIA

[ADAT CHAVERIM, VALLEY CHJ](#)

[KOL HADASH CHJ](#)

[PACIFIC COMMUNITY OF CULTURAL JEWS](#)

COLORADO

[BETH AMI, COLORADO CHJ](#)

CONNECTICUT

[CHJ, FAIRFIELD COUNTY](#)

D.C.

[MACHAR, CSHJ](#)

FLORIDA

[CONGREGATION BETH ADAM](#)

[CHJ, SARASOTA](#)

[HUMANISTIC JEWISH HAVURAH OF SW FL](#)

ILLINOIS

[BETH CHAVERIM, HJC](#)

[KOL HADASH HUMANISTIC CONGREGATION](#)

MARYLAND

[BALTIMORE JEWISH CULTURAL CHAVURAH](#)

MASSACHUSETTS

[KAHAL B'R'AIRA, BOSTON CHJ](#)

MICHIGAN

[THE BIRMINGHAM TEMPLE](#)

MINNESOTA

[OR EMET, CHJ OF MINNESOTA](#)

NEW JERSEY

[KAHAL CHAVERIM, NJ CHJ](#)

NEW YORK

[BETH HASKALAH, ROCHESTER SHJ](#)

[KOL HAVERIM, FINGER LAKES CHJ](#)

[THE CITY CONGREGATION
WESTCHESTER CHJ](#)

NORTH CAROLINA

[KOL HASKALAH](#)

OREGON

[KOL SHALOM CHJ](#)

WASHINGTON

[SECULAR JEWISH CIRCLE OF PUGET SOUND](#)

CANADA

[ORAYNU, TORONTO, ON](#)

Golin, continued from page 1

and if there were an easy fix, we'd already all know it and already be doing it.

Addressing that will be the great challenge we work on together. At the same time, atheists, secular Jews, and humanists in general are growth populations, and that's who we have to go get. The Vision Report offers worthwhile suggestions toward that goal.

I was also heartened by the tremendous lay-leadership involvement in the Vision Report process and the eagerness to take up the gauntlet of its recommendations. No strategic vision should be written in stone, it must constantly be revisited as its best-laid plans butt up against reality. But it has already provided a guideline for the Executive Director position that represents a new direction around development and communications that I hope to prove was correct.

DG- With change, there is sometimes loss. I expect that some people may be feeling considerable disequilibrium about the future of the Society. How will you handle discomfort?

PG- I am someone who regularly tries my best to turn “either/or” situations into “both/and” opportunities. In my first weeks on the job I’ll embark on a listening tour of stakeholders in the movement, to learn what works well for them and what might work better. There’s no question in my mind that we are going to have to try new things, but new things don’t necessarily have to emerge at the expense of what’s currently working for folks.

To those who find it hard to try a single thing new, I’d say: consider how Judaism was built on iconoclasm, the smashing of idols. And how Secular Humanistic Judaism smashed the biggest idol of them all, the belief in God. Are there idols in our congregations that might have inadvertently sprouted up, and now need smashing? From the people in the movement I’ve already met, I see a shared eagerness to smash some idols: in our communities, within ourselves, in society in general. So let’s get smashing! (Note: metaphorical smashing; let’s not actually break stuff.) I’m looking forward to the work.

By Paul Golin and Deb Godden

Fall/Winter 2016-2017

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.

Members of the Society for Humanistic Judaism receive ***Humanorah*** as a benefit of membership. Read ***Humanorah*** online at www.shj.org.

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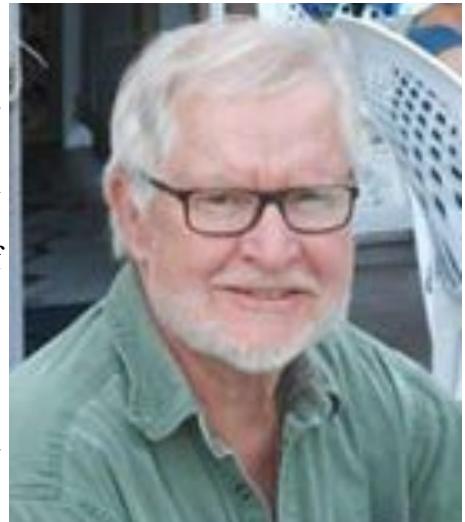
Please address all inquiries about ***Humanorah*** to: [SHJ](http://SHJ.org).

The Value of Belonging to SHJ

As Humanistic Jews, most of us “live” in our immediate communities, not SHJ, so making the case for SHJ membership can sound abstract. That is why I have stressed that the value of membership must be *experienced*; e.g., from SHJ’s rich resource library. But, we can also experience *heightened morale* from being part of a historic and timely mission to provide Jewish community to the secular and the young and unaffiliated. The excitement of our recent Visioning process gives a taste of this kind of morale.

And we do benefit from:

- A. Our immense resource library, currently on GroveSite, with ritual materials, life cycle ceremonies, music, vetted educational curricula, and much more.



We also have -

- [Compelling talks on video by SHJ rabbis](#)
- [Videos by Rabbi Sherwin Wine on the history and nature of Humanistic Judaism](#)
- [Best Practices videos for congregations on YouTube](#)

- B. Further, SHJ provides field visits by the SHJ Rabbi and affiliate Rabbis, or Rabbinic candidates, to assist communities with organization building and other challenges.
- C. The International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, our education arm, trains rabbis and madrikhim for local congregations, and also offers educational seminars in our local communities.
- D. SHJ members can also benefit from our re-purposed SHJ committees, *all composed of members from across our communities* -- Communications & Marketing, Ethical Values in Action, Finance & Fund Development, HuJews, Youth Education – and particularly Community Development & Support, with its mission to assist congregations.
- E. Plus, SHJ leadership vows to build easier means of communication to enable communities to –
 - Share “best practices” in recruiting, retention, programming, education, and fund-raising,
 - Share challenges and discuss ways to approach them,
 - Share initiatives.

Communities collaborating with each other on projects, and having them *succeed*, can be another great morale boost. As you can see from the above, one of our goals is to become more of a participatory organization.

- F. Finally, our new Executive Director, Paul Golin – an expert in facilitating congregations to succeed – will “work large” for us as national spokesperson, strategic leader, fundraiser, and ambassador to donors and the Jewish and humanist worlds. He will work with all of us to help gain the recognition we deserve as the significant secular congregational movement, and new denomination, that we are - the biggest morale boost of all.

By Richard Logan, SHJ President

SHJ VISION PROJECT TAKES OFF!!!



Like a rocket ship blasting off from Kennedy Space Center, the SHJ Board has embraced the Vision Project with fervor and commitment. At the April Board meeting, the Vision Project's Transition Team presented suggested goals and initiatives for each committee. Breakout sessions followed with the members of the committees selecting initiatives and priorities, developing completion schedules and choosing committee chairs. Reporting back to the full Board, the committee chairs described the initiatives their members chose to undertake for the next 6 – 24 months. What an absolute delight it was to see the Vision Project come to life! The room was filled with positive energy and dedication. It was like watching a slot machine gushing coins when three of a kind comes up on the roll!

The Board took on the Vision Project with amazing gusto and enthusiasm. They approved the project team's suggested committee restructuring, retaining the Mission and Vision Statements and adopted four Core Focus Areas to guide the work and decisions of the SHJ to strategically foster the movement.

The Core Focus Areas are:

- Raise the profile of Secular Humanistic Judaism
- Strengthen affiliate communities and their schools, and increase opportunities for individual participation
- Put into action the values of Humanistic Judaism
- Ensure financial stability/sustainability

In addition to the successful search for a new executive director, here is a sample of other initiatives:

Communications & Marketing

Clarifying the SHJ brand, maximizing Internet opportunities (e.g., an open Facebook group has been established)

Community Development & Support

Completing the Best Practice videos (see lead article in this newsletter), developing an SHJ Resource Directory (i.e., talent pool of members with special skills)

Ethical Values in Action

Monitoring current social issues and recommending SHJ action when appropriate, continuing the Humanistic Voices program, developing a Values in Action Program to provide resources to local communities on social justice issues

Finance & Fund Development

Ensuring transparency of financials (e.g., simplify reports and budgets), maintaining sound financial

practices (e.g., using written policies and procedures), evaluating alternatives to current assessment methodology and formula

HuJews

Developing theme (Activism) and programming for Conclave 2017, coordinating with Campus Outreach of IISHJ, evaluating possibility of multi-generational conclave

Youth Education

Developing and sharing resources and activities for youth programs, developing and compiling lesson plans for topical curriculum, developing networking opportunities for the schools

As you can see, your Board representatives have done an amazing job of selecting initiatives that will raise the profile of Secular Humanistic Judaism, strengthen affiliate communities, support individual members and, offer more opportunities for communication, sharing and practicing the values of Humanistic Judaism.

With a heart full of joy and gratitude, I thank all the members of the Vision Project Committee, Transition Team, Executive Committee, Search and Screen Committee and the entire Board of the SHJ for demonstrating such dedication and commitment to live our Mission.

The Society for Humanistic Judaism is taking off like a rocket ship!



By Faith Oremland

SHJ SLOGAN ANNOUNCED

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING COMMITTEE FORMED

The Society for Humanistic Judaism has a new slogan and a new Communications and Marketing Committee. The new slogan, “**Judaism Beyond God**,” was also the title of Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine’s 1985 groundbreaking book, which presented a new Secular and Humanistic alternative to any of the forms of conventional Judaism. The slogan not only defines us, but also is unique to us alone. In conjunction with the new slogan, the Committee hopes to update the SHJ’s **Humanorah** logo to give it a new and fresh look that projects our growing, evolving organization.

And these are just two of the ways that the Committee is working to promote and clarify the SHJ brand in ways that will make our movement really stand out in the sea of Jewish organizations.

Facebook Groups

With the slogan selected and the logo on the horizon, the Committee has also set about expanding the SHJ’s use of social media and other 21st-century marketing tools. These efforts include the launch of a new open [Facebook group](#) which permits anyone—whether affiliated with the movement or not—to post thoughts, questions, pictures, ideas and more. The new group will not replace the existing and very successful SHJ Facebook page, but will take advantage of the possibilities offered by Facebook’s groups which are less centralized than its pages. SHJ created two additional closed Facebook pages for: 1) [SHJ Affiliate Leadership](#) and 2) [SHJ Board](#).

Social Media

The Communications and Marketing Committee in the future is planning to create a podcast series and to expand into other forms of social media such as [Pinterest](#) and Instagram while reinvigorating the Twitter feed and even establishing a multi-authored blog.

Coalition Building

The Committee is also looking to expand SHJ’s partnerships with other organizations, both Jewish and Humanist. On the Jewish side, this includes groups like Big Tent Judaism and InterfaithFamily.com, while on the Humanist side, it includes expanding our relationships with [Secular Coalition for America](#), the [American Humanist Association](#), [United Coalition of Reason](#) and [American Ethical Union](#). For a list of current affiliations [click here](#).

With the hiring of a new Executive Director, the Committee will follow up on these efforts by assisting in creating a comprehensive marketing plan to help us get the word out about our movement to attract new members as we thrive and grow.

Arthur Liehaber, Chair Communications and Marketing Committee

SHJ TALKS: Best Practices for Your Community

Five Tips in Five-ish Minutes

What do SHJ affiliates have in common? We want to grow our communities. So what can SHJ do for you? Create a way to share experience and leadership skills that make our communities strong. With that in mind the SHJ Membership Development Committee got excited about the idea of using short videos to highlight practices for working with members. Communities can benefit from the collective knowledge of SHJ staff and other affiliates. Though the video idea was dreamed up well before the on-going work to set out new vision for SHJ, the initiative fits right in with the important goal of helping to strengthen affiliate communities and their schools, and increase opportunities for individual participation.

These first videos capture tangible practices on welcoming potential new members based on the experience of SHJ staff and members. The content recognizes the importance of bringing in new members and making them feel welcome and wanted in the community. They are prepared especially for those who plan and organize events, and can be viewed by individuals or at Board meetings.

Look for our new videos on the [SHJ YouTube channel](#).

On YouTube, view the introduction to our videos [here](#), and the first of the three videos [here](#).

The Community Development and Support Committee welcomes your ideas for future videos.

By Judi Gladstone

HuJews Gets Activated for Conclave 2017 !

There is nothing to equal the bonding and identity growth to be gained by our teens and young adults from the annual HuJews Conclaves:

“Conclave provides a place for me and other Secular Jewish teens to develop a Jewish identity together. Through the event I have become sure of who I am and made friendships that will last a lifetime.”— *Libby Otto*

“Conclave has enabled me to feel at home in my Jewish identity, both through the thought-provoking dialogue it promotes and the strong, lasting connections I have formed there throughout the years. It's a really special thing to be immersed in a community of shared values for those few days.” —

Miriam A. Feldman



Why do participants keep coming back to Conclave? It's not the fascinating workshops we arrange for them. It's not the brilliant insights the leaders and rabbis share. And it's certainly not the luxury accommodations. It's the friendships, the shared experiences, the community.



Although I've only been to one Conclave, it was evident that this shared experience was powerful. The participants were committed to each other and the community of Secular Humanistic Judaism. Being a religious minority among a religious minority can be challenging for many. And it can be a relief to be “immersed in a community of shared values,” as one SHJ Board Rep put it, “It's an honor for me to be a spectator of this immer-

Our upcoming Con- March. Our theme is have training on how US representatives. food pantry. We'll have thoughtful discussions. We'll share a meaningful Shabbat service. But really what will be happening is the development of Jewish identities and the building of Jewish community.

What's our responsibility as the adults in this community? Simply to provide the opportunity for this shared experience to occur. If we provide the means they will do the work. The young people of our movement will create a community that they can call home. Then we can feel confident that their home is nurturing and supportive as they are leaving our homes. I guarantee that all we need to do is lay the groundwork, the teens and college students will do the rest. Because if there is one thing I have secular faith in, it's the tendency for young people to do great things, when there are great things to be done. For more information about Conclave, contact: info@shj.org .

young people working to create their identity to be “immersed in a community of shared values,” as one SHJ Board Rep put it, “It's an honor for me to be a spectator.”



Thank you, Aleya Schwartz, for your wonderful photos of Conclave 2016. Aleya can be reached at www.AleyaCydney.Photography

By Kate Forest

Building Community: SHJ's Humanistic Jewish Role Model of the Year

Don't you just love it when you discover that someone you admire shares your philosophy and perspective on issues? Being a Secular Humanistic Jew often seems like we are alone in a sea, surrounded by others who do not share our point of view. More than ten years ago, Cary Shaw, a member of the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Fairfield County, Connecticut, and SHJ Board Member and chair of the Communications Committee, put a program together on Albert Einstein, highlighting Einstein's approach to Jewish identity and its similarity to that of Humanistic Judaism. The program was shared among the SHJ affiliates and several communities also sponsored programs featuring Albert Einstein. This launched the annual Society for Humanistic Judaism's Humanistic Jewish Role Model program.



Each year, the SHJ approves a role model, and then shares bibliographic and other programming suggestions for the individual communities to mine and create their own events.

Role Models are chosen using this criteria:

- A person from Jewish history who expresses a secular Jewish identity
- The person can be deceased or alive, although, to this point, all of our roles models have died
- The individual is from different professions
- Consideration is given to gender, profession, how well known they are, and degree of appeal to both adults and children

Our roles models since the inception of the program have been:

Albert Einstein
Sigmund Freud
Betty Friedan

Sherwin Wine
Baruch Spinoza
Jonas Salk

Ernestine Rose
Richard Feynman
Maurice Sendak

Nora Ephron
Carl Sagan

They appear on the [SHJ Website](#).

Additionally, we have archived programs, study groups, web-site links and bibliographies on the SHJ Resource Site. SHJ is here to help you find any materials that you cannot locate.

There are a number of positive reasons to promote and continue this program:

- Knowing that we are not an island unto ourselves, that there are others who share our views, is a great comfort
- Identifying with known accomplished people adds legitimacy to our choices
- Sharing programs with other affiliates helps reduce the isolation inherent in the distances between our communities and enhances our connection to one another
- Having ready-made programs can be very helpful to the smaller communities
- Recycling programs that others have used for past Humanistic Jewish Role Models gives new programming for communities who have not joined the celebration annually
- Learning about these exciting figures from Jewish history can be a great resource when explaining Secular Humanistic Judaism
- Sharing these names with others can enhance the pride we feel about our secular Jewish identity

We are in the final stages of choosing the 2017 Humanistic Jewish Role Model and are anxious to share with one another both the identity of the next role model and the innovative and creative programming that erupts from our affiliates.

By Rabbi Miriam Jerris

Our File Cabinet in the Sky

The Society for Humanistic Judaism offers a file share resource to its members. Here are some ideas for use:

At Kahal B'raira, we have been drawing on GroveSite file sharing support since before the invention of The Cloud. We can't take credit for it, but we know we were there first! There is so much collected information in The File Cabinet in the Sky that supports our congregation that I can only mention a few. We have used GroveSite for:

- **Celebrations-** help in rewriting our liturgy for multiple services. As a lay led congregation, we have gotten great ideas for our High Holidays, Chanukah, Passover services and more.
- **Community Development**-our advertising owes a lot to inspiration received from seeing what others have done.
- **Adult Education and programming ideas including** – Humanistic Jewish Role Model of the Year

In February 2016, as we were observing Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month, we introduced Carl Sagan as Humanistic Jewish Role Model of the Year. You can view the video we screened from YouTube. We learned of it on GroveSite:

["A Universe Not Made for Us"](#)

The content of this video, narrated by Sagan, was a very moving viewing experience for many present.

After the screening, we held a transitional discussion before our Awareness and Inclusion Program:

“Dealing with Personal Challenges: if not God and religion or prayer THEN how DO we deal with our personal challenges anyway?”

These are a few of the ways information from GroveSite has helped our congregation. It is a file cabinet available to each of us as Society members. Let's use it!

By Jon Levine

SHJ offers many opportunities for collaboration and sharing of resources. One of the most significant avenues is “SHJ Resources for Congregations” on GroveSite, our web based collaboration tool and resource library. There are vast resources on GroveSite for programming, holidays, education and administration to aid individuals and congregations in every aspect of running a humanistic community.

Using easy to navigate menus, users can quickly reveal a variety of subjects and documents ready for use and download.

- **Are you looking for curriculum, lesson plans, plays, projects and more for the upcoming school year?**
Visit the Youth Education page and follow the links for a wide selection of materials, including ceremonies (mitzvah, welcome back, and graduation), holiday programs, and more!
- **Are you seeking sample service material, humanistic music, or life cycle resources?**
Go to the Celebrations page to discover all that SHJ has complied for your use!
- **Do you want programming material and other information for adults?**
Visit the Adult Education and Programs page and view our libraries for materials including adult curricula, IISHJ program, and SHJ’s annual humanist role models (spanning more than a decade).

The Community Development and Publication Archives pages provide users with a rich source of material ranging from membership acquisition and retention, fundraising resources, advertising materials, and an archive of community newsletters dating back more than five years.

All this and more is available now! SHJ is happy to provide access to GroveSite for all SHJ members. To request access, email Jennifer Grodsky, SHJ’s information manager, at jennifergrodsky@shj.org.

By Jennifer Grodsky



FROM OUR COMMUNITIES

A Fun and Informative Weekend with Rabbi Frank Tamburello at Machar, Washington D.C.

So...a rabbi, a priest, and an Italian teacher walk into Machar . . . and they are ALL Rabbi Frank Tamburello!



Machar enjoyed our SHJ-provided field visit event April 1-3, 2016 by hosting Rabbi Frank Tamburello of New York City, part-time rabbi of the Westchester Community for Humanistic Judaism and secular celebrant to people of many cultures. Rabbi Tamburello attended Catholic school as a child and trained to be a priest. When he left the priesthood he was attracted to Judaism, and then specifically secular humanistic Judaism. He is a member of our Association of Humanistic Rabbis.

Rabbi Tamburello co-officiated our Friday Shabbat service with our Rabbi Nehama Benmosche, supported by our Machar choir, allowing members to learn some new songs.

Saturday the Machar board and some additional members held a lunch meeting with Rabbi Tamburello at which we each shared what makes Machar special for us. The fruitful discussion, stimulated by Rabbi Tamburello's commitment to providing warmth and acceptance to each member and visitor, led to a useful list of ways we can keep Machar strong.

Saturday evening Rabbi Tamburello led us in a Havdalah service and a group writing of a preface to our to-be-created Machar Torah, describing what Machar means to us.

Since a Torah is a teaching document, we can gather and print onto parchment pages the stories of our community and our individual members, through events in the coming year, Machar's 40th year! Those documents will make up a scroll which we can assemble and keep as our own Torah.

Sunday morning Rabbi Tamburello attracted a record 90 people to our Adult Education audience for his talk, "The Hidden Jews of Southern Italy." He has done extensive research (using his skills in reading medieval Italian) into the history of Judaism in Southern Italy as well as the signs of Jewish traditions which have been preserved in many modern Southern Italian families. Unlike in other European countries, in Italy many Jews did not live separately from their countrymen. Over time many families lost the knowledge of their Jewish past, but have been recently shown that some of their family rituals are in fact the remnants of their Jewish ancestry. Rabbi Tamburello's own family has such Jewish traditions that were not recognized to be Jewish. The film, *The Secret Jews of Calabria*, produced by Rabbi Barbara Aiello, teaches about the Sephardic *Anusim*, whose families are just discovering their Jewish roots. We thank Rabbi Tamburello for a stimulating weekend that also helped *Macharniks* get to know each other better.



By Marlene Cohen

*Congratulations & Thanks to the
Presidents & Leaders
of Our Affiliated Communities:*

Arizona

Jeffrey Schesnol, Or Adam
Sandee Binyon, Secular Humanist Jewish Circle

California

Jonathan Friedmann, Adat Chaverim, CHJ,
Jane Eisenstark, Kol Hadash of Northern California
Leslie Zwick, The Pacific Community

Colorado

Sheila Malcolm, Beth Ami Colorado CHJ

Connecticut

Alexandra Mack, CHJ, Fairfield County

D.C.

Rahel Hanadari, Machar

Florida

Eugenio Leb, Congregation Beth Adam
Alice D'Souza, CHJ, Sarasota
Paula Creed, Humanistic Jewish Havurah of SW Florida

Illinois

Debbie Rusnak, Beth Chaverim
Sheila Sebor, Kol Hadash

Maryland

Elise Saltzberg, Art Starr, Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah

Massachusetts

Sara Laschever, Tim Riley, Kahal B'raira

Michigan

Charles Paul, Birmingham Temple

Minnesota

Lisa Gardner-Springer, Janet Mayer, Or Emet

New Jersey

Doug Cudler, Kahal Chaverim, NJ

New York

Robert Goldstein, Beth Haskalah
Martin Shore, Dan Wyman, The City Congregation
Jonathan Joseph, Kol Haverim, Finger Lakes CHJ
Dmitry Turovsky, Westchester CHJ

North Carolina

Susan Davis, Jennifer Sessler, Kol Haskalah

Oregon

Eleanor (Elly) Adelman, Kol Shalom, CHJ

Washington

Erica Jonlin, Secular Jewish Circle of Puget Sound

Canada

Mark Brender, Oraynu

**ADAT CHAVERIM'S
TARZAN YEAR**

In 2015-16 our Sunday Cultural School found a new home at the Tarzana Community & Cultural Center (TCCC). A suburb of Los Angeles, Tarzana began in 1919 as the private ranch of Edgar Rice Burroughs, creator of Tarzan of the Apes. Burroughs later subdivided and sold the land for residential development. TCCC boasts beautiful gardens and a small schoolhouse-style building, which doubles as a Tarzan museum. Our students were surrounded by photos, posters, comic books, and memorabilia related to the city's famous namesake.

Rather than ignoring the feral-child-turned-hero in the room, we developed a curriculum around seven Jewish values (*midot*) that Tarzan exemplifies. Each class session began with a lesson from the pages of Tarzan. He risks his life to save people and animals, embodying *Ometz Lev* — courage of heart. He welcomes travelers and lost explorers who stumble upon his jungle home, demonstrating *Hachnasat Orchim* — hospitality (lit. “bringing in guests”). He lives in harmony with nature and conserves resources, modeling *Tikkun Olam* — caring for the Earth.

Structuring our school year around Tarzan accomplished several goals. It connected students to the artifacts surrounding them. It gave them an entertaining entry point to class topics. It taught them that the Jewish values we cherish are also universal values. And it showed them that we can all possess heroic qualities.

By Cantor Jonathan L. Friedmann, PhD.



BETH AMI GETS CONNECTED!

Beth Ami – Colorado Congregation for Humanistic Judaism is committed to growing our congregation by getting out there in the greater community! The stunning and brand new Boulder Jewish Community Center is one of our destinations.

What are we doing? Books and media purchased from the SHJ bookstore fill a Humanistic Judaism section of the new library. Much of that material was graciously donated by the Society for Humanistic Judaism. A Beth Ami member's donation to the building will be honored with plaques referring to Humanistic Judaism in the library and naming a meeting room after him.

We are sponsoring events at the J that benefit the greater Jewish community.

One is a summer camp concert by nationally-known musician Jay Sand and "All Around This World" that



sent children and parents home on a Friday afternoon in July humming tunes and moving to global music rhythms. Our publicity for the concert gave us an opportunity to advertise and explain the Beth Ami community.

A Beth Ami member sits on the J's adult education board and helps plan exciting and inspiring Arts, Culture and Education programming. As a result, we'll be presenting, in September, on the topic of Death and Dying without a Belief in God.

The new J will hopefully be our new home for large gatherings, such as high holidays and Passover, and a possible venue for B'nai Mitzvah ceremonies. We're delighted to be truly included in our local Jewish community.

By Sheila Malcolm, Madrikha

A MEMBER WRITES:

THOUGHTS ON MY IDENTITY AS A JEW AMONG JEWS

I recently watched a video, ["Changing Understandings of Jewish Peoplehood: Implications for American Jewry & Secular Humanistic Judaism," by Rabbi Jeffrey Falick](#) in which he described many of the categories often used to provide an inclusive definition of Judaism. I do not doubt his views regarding the failure of the categories he mentions. But, then I thought to myself, perhaps naively, that I do share with most, if not all other Jews, characteristics which are important to me and my identity as a Jew. So, I made the following list, which may resonate with others:

1. We share a name (Jew).
2. We share seeing the various responses of individuals and groups when we reveal that we are Jewish ("Oh, you're one of the Jew people," I heard at my friend's wedding in Ohio).
3. We share the various responses of Jews as we become aware of how non-Jews have thought about and treated Jews historically (Shylock, inquisitions, holocaust, etc.). Ditto in the present tense (bias in the United Nations, resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe, etc.).
4. We share a relationship to a long mythological and non-mythological history (the Torah, the diaspora, the ghettos, the holocaust, the establishment of Israel, etc.).
5. We share many traditional customs (holidays, foods, etc.) and aesthetic styles in the arts (music, dance, etc.).
6. We share at least some insight into the experiences of other minorities (Native Americans, Blacks, those with disabilities, etc.).
7. We share in valuing life (L'Chaim).
8. We share with many Jews in valuing open-mindedness (respect for the views of others, willingness to consider changing one's views, thinking "outside of the box").
9. We share with many Jews in focusing primarily on behavior, and only secondarily, or not at all, on motivations ("Do not do unto others...").
10. We share in the recognition that Israel exists; and, that fact alone influences our thoughts and feelings.

Continued on page 13

OR EMET LEARNS ABOUT THE ROUTES AND ROOTS OF HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

This spring, Or Emet (Twin Cities, MN), accomplished a long time goal by hosting a seminar for our members and others in the community to expand our understanding of the historical roots of Humanistic Judaism, and its place within the constellation of contemporary branches of the Jewish family tree. The seminar was titled *Routes and Roots: The Evolution of Humanistic Judaism*, was held over the weekend of April 8 – 10, 2016, and was led by Rabbi Adam Chalom, who serves as rabbi of Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation in Lincolnshire, IL, as well as Dean for North America of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism. Rabbi Chalom's participation was made possible in part through a generous grant from SHJ.

Routes and Roots began on Friday evening with a Shabbat service led by Rabbi Chalom, which incorporated a lively discussion of the role of Jewish traditions in Secular Humanistic Judaism. Like all Or Emet Shabbat services, it took place at the Sabes Jewish Community Center in Saint Louis Park, and was followed by a congenial Oneg Shabbat.

Saturday was a full day of learning, with Rabbi Chalom enriching us with his wealth of knowledge regarding both the place of secular humanism in the history of the Jewish people. Beginning with the ancient kingdoms of the Middle East, our time travels led us through many places, ideas, and great thinkers including Maimonides 13 Principles of Faith, the Inquisition, the excommunication of Baruch Spinoza, Napoleon's questions to the Paris Sanhedrin, the reform movement among German Jews, up to the Pittsburgh Platform of Reform Judaism in 1885. We also explored different paths secular Judaism took as it entered the modern era: Acculturation, Jewish Socialism, Cosmopolitanism, Yiddishism, and Zionism. Using an abundance of original documents, his own insights into our history, and the contributions of Or Emet community members, Rabbi Chalom enabled a day of high interest and energy levels.

Routes and Roots concluded with a half-day session on Sunday which was devoted to the broader movements of Secularism and Humanism, and the place held by Humanistic Judaism within those movements, drawing on twentieth century writings and leaders as well as looking ahead to the possible futures of our movement. The Saturday and Sunday programs were held on the campus of Hamline University in Saint Paul. A staggering volume of information and food for thought was packed into less than 48 hours, and yet rather than feeling satiated, most participants felt a hunger to learn more.

In addition to the *Routes and Roots* seminar, Rabbi Chalom gave a talk on Thursday evening, April 7 to a student atheist society at the University of Minnesota on the topic "Holidays without the Holy: Secular Approaches to Celebrations." On Friday morning, Or Emet leaders hosted a brunch to bring together the leaders of the Jewish Federation of Saint Paul, Jewish Federation of Minneapolis, Saint Paul Jewish Community Center, Minneapolis (Sabes) Jewish Community Center, and Talmud Torah Day School to meet Rabbi Chalom to discuss the broad underpinnings of Humanistic Judaism.

Rabbi Chalom's visit, and the entire seminar, could not have happened without dedicated leadership on the part of Or Emet's Executive Committee, and in particular, Seminar Chair Natalie Rosinsky. Anyone who has undertaken such an event knows how much work it is, and how many things can go wrong on the path to fruition. For those who attended, the effort is greatly appreciated. We are forever enriched.

By Arty Dorman

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"KESHER: COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS" AND "ON THE MOVE,"
WITH TIMELY NEWS ABOUT SHJ COMMUNITIES, THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES, AND LINKS OF INTEREST.

CARL SAGAN'S PASSION FOR SCIENCE ENTHRALLS ORAYNU

This year, Oraynu in Toronto, Ontario (Canada) celebrated Darwin Day and the popular, humanist scientist, Carl Sagan. We invited Mehdi Sabzalian, a graduate student in Aerospace engineering at the University of Toronto, to inform us about his life, his work, and the great impact he has had on astronomy and popularizing science in the general public. A brilliant communicator, Sagan was able to take complex ideas and simplify them so the average person could understand the science he was so passionately involved in. I might add here that our speaker that night was also clearly passionate as he spoke to us about the man and his work. During the presentation, Mehdi showed us a picture of earth against the blackness of space. This is what Sagan referred to as the "pale blue dot." While looking at the picture, we heard the following words spoken by Sagan himself:

"Look again at that dot. That's here. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every 'superstar,' every 'supreme leader,' every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there-on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam."

From: Carl Sagan, Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space

Science is not necessarily a subject that keeps the non-scientific community enthralled, but by the end of the presentation, it was evident by some questions from the audience that our interest had been ignited. Mehdi spoke about Sagan's work on Voyager's 1 and 2, which were launched in the 1970's to explore the outer planets and added an enormous amount of information to scientific knowledge. His importance to us is that he showed us a way to understand the universe without resorting to mysticism. In his own words:

"How is it that hardly any major religion has looked at science and concluded, "This is better than we thought! The Universe is much bigger than our prophets said, grander, more subtle, more elegant?" Instead they say, "No, no, no! My god is a little god, and I want him to stay that way." A religion, old or new, that stressed the magnificence of the Universe as revealed by modern science might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths."

From: Carl Sagan, Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space

By Rita Small

Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah Honors Sholem Aleichem

We're told that in his dying days Sholem Aleichem requested that his friends and family select one of his "merry" stories to read together aloud, telling them "Let my name be remembered with laughter or not at all." This year, for the first time, we decided to honor Mr. Rabinovich's wishes.

After consulting Bennett Muraskin's *Guide to Yiddish Short Stories*, two of us independently screened three humorous Aleichem stories -- "Back From the Draft," "The Malicious Matza," and "Two Dead Men." We felt that "The Malicious Matza" was too short, but may be good for inclusion in a future seder. "Back From the Draft" was the hands-down winner. Sending the story out as an attachment (in English), we asked that everyone who wanted to participate in reading it collectively first read it alone. On May 22, six days after Aleichem's date of death, we took turns reading the story together.

Who could imagine that such a potentially tragic subject as Jews being drafted into the czar's army would be funny? But "Back From the Draft" was a hoot. Aleichem satirized the Czarist Russian conscription bureaucracy, Jewish naming practices, and other absurdities both within the Jewish community and between Jews and government authorities. The subject matter was especially resonant for those of us whose ancestors fled Russia to avoid the draft. We highly recommend this story and activities of this kind to the other affiliates.

By Elise Saltzberg

CHAI DAY - A NEW HOLIDAY

Kol Shalom, Portland, OR, has inaugurated Chai Day, a holiday to celebrate life! The Hebrew word of course, means LIFE. Since the numerical value of its letters, *chet* and *yud*, add up to 18, Chai Day will be celebrated on the 18th of each month. Life is to be embraced, appreciated, lived and shared every day, but too often we forget. The concept behind Chai Day is to have a day each month on the 18th to do just that: a feel-good day, doing something fun or doing something that makes someone else's day brighter or better.

Fourteen Kol Shalomers gathered on Saturday, June 18, to celebrate Chai Day's birth. With our taste buds sated with celebratory root beer floats (yum), we had a lively discussion and brainstormed ideas for different ways to observe Chai Day each month. We decided that in months when the 18th falls on a weekend, we'll organize a special event to celebrate. In other months without a group activity, we will offer a topic on KS email chat list (perhaps we will call it Chai Chat), and our Facebook page for people to share their responses. Or sometimes we will just post suggestions for something to do on that day; It may be as simple as just singing in the shower or holding someone's hand.

For our first Chai Day (after its birth) on July 18, folks were asked to consider the topic of gratitude: what is the first thing that comes to mind when asked what you're grateful for? I expressed that I was grateful for *"My Life and my Awesome family and friends,"* I immediately felt better, my day got brighter and I think others who participated in the chat felt the same.

September 18 is a Sunday, and we are excited about our first planned KS community event for Chai Day--an afternoon of Readers' Theater followed by a potluck. What fun!

*"Stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, climb more mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot oftener, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more and cry less.
LIFE must be lived as we go along."*

Robert J. Hastings, Tinyburg Tales

We look forward to Chai Day's Growing and Becoming.

By DeBi Adler Strode

Continued from page 10, Thoughts on My Identity as a Jew Among Jews

11. We share in caring about what happens in Israel and what happens to Israel.
12. We share (excluding myself and many secular Jews) in thinking that Jews have a special relationship with a god.
13. We share a sense that being Jewish enriches our lives.
14. We share pride in Jewish positive accomplishments (however one defines those accomplishments).
15. We share disappointment in Jewish negative activities (however one defines those activities).
16. We share in valuing "Shalom" and "Tikkun Olam."

*By Kent Barrabee,
Secular Humanist Jewish Circle, Tucson, Arizona*

Editor's Note: In praise of conversations and sharing, we invite responses from others.

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The Society for Humanistic Judaism is pleased to thank the contributors
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UPCOMING EVENTS

HOLIDAYS — 5775 - 5776 / 2016-2017

October 8, 2016 — Rabbinic Candidate Jeremy Kridel visits Secular Humanist Jewish Circle, Tucson, AZ. Contact: [The Community](#)

October 21-23, 2016 — Rabbi Miriam Jerris visits CHJ, Fairfield, CT. Contact: [Alexandra Mack](#)

October 28-30, 2016 — IISHJ Learning Tour of Philadelphia, PA. Contact: [Kate Forest](#)

November 11-13, 2016 — SHJ Board Meeting, Farmington Hills, MI. Contact: [SHJ](#)

March 3-5, 2017 — Executive Director, Paul Golin, visits CHJ Sarasota, FL. Contact: [Arlene Pearlman](#)

March 24-26, 2017 — HuJews Conclave, Washington, D.C. Contact: Conclave Coordinator, [Kate Forest](#)

(Beginning in the evening)

Rosh Hashana: October 2

Yom Kippur: October 11

Sukkot: October 16

Hanukka: December 24

Tu Bi-Shevat: Feb. 10

Purim: March 11

Passover: April 10

Yom HaShoa: April 23

Yom HaAtsmaut: May 1

Lag B'Omer: May 13

Shavuot: May 30