

HEBREW SCHOOL

On the fourth night of Chanukah we celebrated at OZ with a drive-in candle lighting. Rabbi Amy, Cantor Steve and I welcomed families, sang songs, lit a tiki torch menorah and danced (solo) in the parking lot with masks on. See photo below. Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. While driving home, I thought about how our ancestors celebrated this holiday during times of duress. They lit menorahs in basements, caves and ghettos, unable to share the light but still doing what they could to mark the holiday. It surely puts our current situation in perspective.

This week I realized just how much I, personally, am affected by the pandemic in how deeply I miss connecting with OZHS families. Greeting kids and parents at the door, popping into classes while they are in session, talking with parents throughout the school day, chatting with students during recess, a quick conversation in the hall and meeting with everyone all together in the main sanctuary, small sanctuary or social hall – these encounters are what charge my batteries and make me smile.

Human connection is a powerful thing. I can't wait until we get to be together again. But I will be patient and appreciate the opportunities that online learning offers us. Yes, it can be an incredibly frustrating and exhausting platform but seeing your faces, even if it is only on screen, still brings me joy. And in the meantime, as I look towards next semester, I will continue to create a curriculum that includes plans for outdoor in person gatherings where the situation allows. The spring semester brings us these possible options: a **January** Walk In the Woods for Tu b'Shevat at Red Rocks, a **February** Drive-In Havdalah and Hot Chocolate and a Purim CAR-nival, a **March** to Freedom at Oakledge Park, an **April** Lag b'Omer family hike up Mt. Philo and a Peace and Wellness Day at OZ in **May**. All subject to pandemic regulations at that time. Stay tuned for more details as they evolve. In addition, we will continue our online classes, content delivery days and distribution of monthly Family Engagement Kits. I appreciate your flexibility and understanding of our efforts to keep our whole community safe.

Community demands connection. It is there in person, it is there online, it is there in our hearts and I see it in the light of the menorah.

Stay safe, stay healthy everyone.

~ Naomi Barell
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