

Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Los Angeles

FALL 2008 NEWSLETTER



Enhancing Quality | Increasing Access | Encouraging Participation

A Message from the President Marc Rohatiner

While over the years, I have been affiliated with a number of organizations, I have always considered the Bureau of Jewish Education to be unique. It is one of a few organizations where representatives of all branches of Judaism work in complete concert advancing one goal; enhanced Jewish education. Regardless of individual affiliations, each of the BJE's lay leaders recognizes that Jewish education will ensure not only the survival of the Jewish people, but will also contribute to the growth, vibrancy and strength of our community. It is for that reason that it is a tremendous honor to assume the presidency of this important and special organization.



The BJE's mission encompasses numerous programs and provides many services. While the myriad of programs and services is part of the BJE's strength, it sometimes makes it difficult to describe just what the BJE does. Personally, even after having been affiliated with the BJE for many years, I am still constantly learning about various Bureau undertakings. This lack of awareness of the Bureau's impact and effectiveness in serving so many institutions, teachers, students and parents was reflected in the course of interviews conducted with key stakeholders as part of the BJE's strategic planning process. It is for that reason that one of my primary goals, over the next many months, will be to better communicate the positive role that the BJE plays in our community.

I look forward to working with the professional staff led by Dr. Gil Graff. From a layperson's perspective, becoming involved in the BJE has always been easy given the support and guidance provided by each and every staff member. I also look forward to working with our board and lay leaders. Simply stated there is no other organization blessed with a lay leadership that is as devoted and talented. Finally, I want to thank our outgoing president, Elaine Lindheim for the work she has done. Elaine has been a role model for me. Her inherent leadership qualities have been on constant display in the many meetings that we have participated in together. Elaine is thoughtful, wise, calm, inclusive, and is the ultimate consensus builder. She and the other past presidents of the BJE have set the bar incredibly high for me and all future presidents.

Shanah tovah, as we begin a new year,

JkidLA.org

It's new, comprehensive, and available to parents 24/7

Parents can seek out Jewish educational opportunities from their blackberries, I-phones and laptops. The BJE has launched **JkidLA.org** to provide parents convenient, round-the-clock access to an up-to-date listing of the myriad of Jewish educational opportunities for kids and families throughout the Greater Los Angeles area.

Parents looking for something to do with their preschoolers this Sunday – **JkidLA.org** will link them to the latest happenings at the Jewish Community Library, the Zimmer Museum, the Skirball and a host of other sites throughout the community. Moms and dads curious about Jewish schools in their

Continued on page 4

View the BJE's catalog of academic and in-service opportunities for teachers! Continuing Professional Education offerings are online at www.bjela.org.

VISION

Jewish learning is the foundation of vibrant Jewish living. The Bureau of Jewish Education, a center of excellence, will ensure present and future generations of knowledgeable Jews who are committed to their religious and cultural heritage and an enduring connection with Israel. Through promoting lifelong Jewish learning, the Bureau of Jewish Education will play a vital role in fostering meaningful Jewish continuity and strengthening contemporary American Jewish life.

MISSION

The mission of the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Los Angeles is to enhance quality, increase access, and encourage participation in Jewish education throughout the Jewish communities of Greater Los Angeles. The Bureau independently and in collaboration with schools and other community institutions is an advocate, planner, catalyst, and creative leader for strengthening and advancing Jewish learning, with special emphasis on children and youth, early childhood through high school, their educators and parents.



The Bureau of Jewish Education is a beneficiary of The Jewish Federation



From the Executive Director Dr. Gil Graff



The late University of Chicago professor, Joseph Schwab, wrote extensively about the four “commonplaces” of education: the learner, the milieu, the subject matter and the teacher. Appropriately, educators in recent generations have focused on understanding the learner and his/her developmental needs. The milieu – the context within which learning takes place – is, likewise, recognized as a factor to be seriously considered in thinking about curriculum and instruction. Each subject, be it math or science, the humanities, arts or religious study, understandably calls for unique educational approaches.

The fourth commonplace, the teacher, is “last” only alphabetically. “Provide yourself a teacher,” the Mishnah (Avot 1,6) wisely counsels. The more than 2,500 teachers who guide the 28,000 students in BJE-affiliated schools are essential to the educational experiences and learning outcomes of the students who populate the classrooms of our community. It is for this reason that so much of the work of the Bureau of Jewish Education is about strengthening the skills and abilities of teachers to more effectively relate to students and subject matter, with due regard for the contemporary environment.

The internal capacity of the BJE to carry out its mission of enhancing the quality of Jewish education, encouraging participation and promoting access is, likewise, heavily dependent on outstanding personnel. The staff of the BJE is comprised of individuals who are educational leaders in their fields. Their standing to mentor and influence educators in the 150 schools with which the Bureau works, benefits from the longstanding relationships that BJE specialists have developed, over the course of decades of providing sustained support.

During the past summer, two longstanding members of the Bureau’s educational staff team concluded decades of dedicated service to the BJE and its affiliates. Yoni Shultz, Director of School Personnel Services for 21 years, functioned as a “full service” Personnel office, recruiting teachers, referring teachers to hundreds of open positions each year, counseling educators and school boards about personnel issues, publishing a teachers’ newsletter, developing teacher benefits programs and administering a Code of Personnel Practice. Dr. Ken Schaefer retired after nearly 38 years devoted primarily to psychological services and special needs education. Dr. Schaefer’s many contributions to the community’s Jewish educational system included an early detection/intervention program to help student learning, an initiative – through funds raised from caring philanthropists – to strengthen resource room services for students at Jewish day schools, a public lecture series on special needs educational issues, disabilities awareness programs, ongoing information and referral to assist students, families and educators, and more.

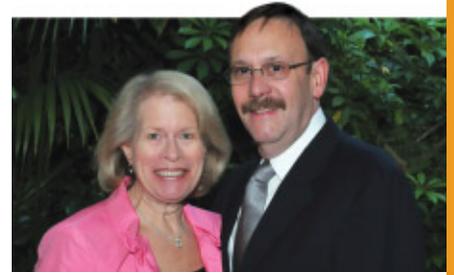
The imprint of the educators and board leaders of the BJE on Jewish education in Los Angeles is enduring. One of the Bureau’s past Presidents, an internationally renowned architect, once observed to me that while he had seen acclaimed buildings that he had designed razed to make way for newer construction, the education that a person receives and transmits in his/her lifetime extends throughout the generations.

At the threshold of the New Year, I thank outgoing BJE President Elaine Lindheim for her visionary leadership over the past three years, and welcome her able successor Marc Rohatiner to the Presidency of the Bureau. They and the remarkable people who serve on the BJE board represent an essential “commonplace” in the capacity of the BJE to be of service to schools, teachers, parents and children. May each of us recognize the responsibility that comes with influencing the many learners – children, students, family and friends – with whom our lives are intertwined.

Shanah tovah!

RESERVE THE EVENING OF JANUARY 15TH

Join BJE In Honoring Dr. Alan M. Spiwak and Sheila Baran Spiwak



Mark your calendars! The Bureau of Jewish Education will honor Dr. Alan M. Spiwak and Sheila Baran Spiwak at the BJE's Annual Gala Celebration on Thursday evening, January 15, 2009 at Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel in West Los Angeles.

The Spiwaks care deeply about youth and education. Sheila, a Vice President of the BJE and a long-standing Board member, led the Bureau's Special Needs Task Force to help identify and meet the challenges of educating more children with special needs at Jewish schools. Alan, a BJE



BJE Gala Event Co-Chairs prepare for an exciting evening honoring Dr. Alan M. Spiwak and Sheila Baran Spiwak. (From left): Allen Weinstock, Judy Weinstock, Shari Weiner, Jill Sperling, Angel Schneider and Adrian Miller

Board member and Chair of the Bureau's Planning and Budget Committee, Manager of Southwestern Bag Company, the outgoing President of Jewish Free Loan, and a licensed psychologist, also lent his expertise and resolve to the work of the Special Needs Task Force. Furthermore, Alan and Sheila, as well as the Baran family, provide student scholarships enabling children from low and middle-income families to attend Jewish day schools and participate in other Jewish educational programs.

Both Sheila and Alan understand and value the vital role of the classroom teacher. They and the Baran family help fund BJE Continuing Professional Education programs in efforts to further develop a highly-trained cadre of outstanding educators who will reach and inspire a new generation of Jewishly-educated and committed Jews. The Spiwaks also recognize that Jewish learning extends beyond the classroom and the elementary years. They have personally participated in two of the BJE's "March of the Living" journeys and have made it possible for more teens to share in this profound, life-changing Jewish educational experience.

The Spiwaks view philanthropy and personal involvement as a way of life and as an extension of the

values with which they were raised. This most unassuming, dedicated, and philanthropic couple works wholeheartedly to build a thriving and enduring Jewish community. Their contributions and hands-on volunteerism within The Jewish Federation, The Jewish

Community Foundation of Los Angeles, Jewish Family Service, Sova, Camp Ramah, Temple Beth Am and numerous organizations all contribute to the betterment of Jewish children and their families.

Alan and Sheila are the proud parents of two Jewishly-educated adult

children who are destined to carry on the family legacy of service and charitable giving. Aaron recently graduated from Columbia Law School, and Sarah is student teaching and completing her credential program at the University of Southern California.

Please join us on January 15, 2009 as we celebrate and honor Dr. Alan M. Spiwak and Sheila Baran Spiwak. Their consummate leadership, commitment, and generous financial support of the Bureau of Jewish Education help the agency fulfill its mission to enhance quality, increase access, and encourage participation in Jewish education throughout the Jewish communities of Greater Los Angeles. **For further information about the dinner and ad book in Sheila and Alan's honor, please contact Stacey Barrett at (323) 761-8612 or sbarrett@bjela.org.**

The Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Los Angeles helps over 150 affiliated schools and 2,500 educators provide high quality education to more than 28,000 students .

BJE “March of the Living” Enrollment Underway

For two decades, educators from the Los Angeles Bureau of Jewish Education have led groups of L.A. teens on the international “March of the Living” program, joining thousands of Jewish teens from all parts of the globe in commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day (Yom HaShoah)

in Auschwitz and Israel’s Independence Day (Yom Ha-Atzma’ut) in Israel. Throughout the years, one of the most powerful aspects of the “March” has been

“The March has been a constant on my mind throughout my days since I returned. It has reconfigured the lenses through which I see everything and I am so grateful for having had that opportunity.”

— Daniel

the opportunity of experiencing the program with survivors of the Shoah, who rebuilt their lives in Los Angeles. Under the direction of Monise Neumann, the 2008 Los Angeles BJE “March” group included 130 teens, accompanied by 8 survivors and an outstanding educational staff. Regrettably, there was a waiting list for program admission that could not be accommodated.

The 2009 “March” will take place April 19-May 3, 2009. The application deadline is December 12, and registration is currently underway. Beyond December 12, enrollment is on a “space available” basis. For further information, contact Monise Neumann, (323) 761-8613 or mneumann@bjela.org.



BJE Welcomes Glenn Karonsky

Director of School Personnel Services for Religious Education

In his new position as the BJE’s Director of School Personnel Services for Religious Education, Rabbi Glenn Karonsky works closely with teachers, administrators and volunteer leadership to provide the Bureau’s day and religious school systems with outstanding educational personnel.



Glenn has served in a variety of capacities in the field of Jewish education but reflects back on his days as Director of Camp Ramah in California as particularly satisfying given that many of today’s local Jewish lay and professional leadership worked with him at camp. After Ramah, Glenn became Hadassah’s chief youth professional and spearheaded a drive to re-fashion Hadassah’s youth related projects and camps in the U.S. and Israel. For 13 years, he served as the founding Executive Director of the Center for Jewish Living and Learning, one of the BJE’s sister agencies in Oakland.

“Each setting of Jewish education requires outstanding teachers, if children are to learn and grow from their experiences. That is why I am particularly pleased to be taking on the portfolio of personnel services at the BJE,” Glenn notes. The BJE could not have enlisted a person better suited to serving its network of 2500 educators in over 150 schools than Rabbi Glenn Karonsky. He can be reached at (323) 761-8631 or gkaronsky@bjela.org.

JkidLA.org continued from page 1

neighborhood – a click of the mouse will show them what’s available in their area. **JkidLA.org** also helps parents navigate Israel programs for their teens, summer camps for their kids, and an endless variety of Jewish educational opportunities that meet their family’s needs and connect them with the Jewish community.

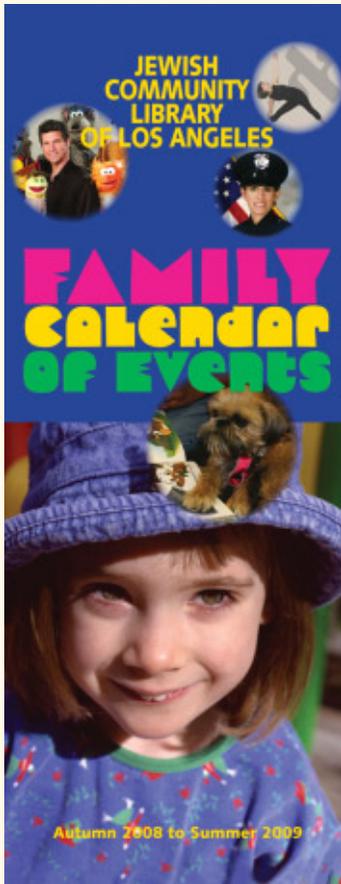
JkidLA.org complements the individualized services provided by BJE’s Concierges who personally guide parents to the Jewish educational experiences that best match their family’s needs. **JkidLA.org** can also connect parents seeking more personalized attention to the BJE’s Los Angeles and Valley Concierges. This interactive resource is made possible through funding from Jewish Venture Philanthropy and the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles. Check it out, at your convenience, www.JkidLA.org.



Jewish Community Library Calendar of Events Launches in September

The Jewish Community Library of Los Angeles has released an impressive 2008-2009 Calendar of Events for families, featuring storytellers, musicians, authors, artisans and more. September events include a multi-ethnic acting troupe, pickle-making, holiday singing and a remarkable reading program.

To receive a calendar, email RESOURCE@JCLA.ORG or check the web at WWW.JCLA.ORG.



Why Jewish Education?

By **DR. DAVID ACKERMAN**, *BJE Director of Educational Services*

The following article initially appeared in the August 2008 issue of *Jewish Life*, a magazine published by the *Jewish Journal*.



Once asked my father, *olav hashalom*, why we went to Jewish schools as kids. "It was important to us that you learn Hebrew," he answered. It's easy to understand that rationale, even though others might substitute some other subject – Bible, Prayer, Israel – as the reason for choosing Jewish education for their children. Focusing on subject matter, though, overlooks the underlying reason for choosing Jewish education.

The two basic questions of adolescence are "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" (The most frequent question of adolescence, "Can you take me to the mall?" is another story.) These questions represent conflicting urges (to be a unique individual versus a member of a group with shared characteristics) and provide the fundamental answer to the question: "Why Jewish education?" Jewish education helps children understand who they are and that they are special, both as individuals and as members of the Jewish people.

It is important to remember that Jewish education comes in all shapes and sizes and includes formal schooling (early childhood, religious schools, and day schools) as well as informal opportunities (youth groups, summer camps, and trips to Israel). In addition, the impact of institutional programs depends upon reinforcement in the home (in terms of Jewish activity, religious or otherwise). Research shows that it is the cumulative impact of involvement in multiple Jewish educational programs and experiences that yields the most significant outcomes. Nonetheless, the Jewish school is the primary "pipeline" into the world of Jewish learning and knowledge.

While Jewish schools are organized, typically, around subjects, the true curriculum of the Jewish school is the vocabulary of Jewish life. That is, we send our children to Jewish schools to learn Jewish ways of thinking, acting, and feeling, expecting that to be a primary lens, if not the primary lens, for perceiving the world. And because the vocabulary of Jewish life is vast, with a complicated grammar, and sophisticated set of pragmatics, it requires many years of engagement and practice to become a fluent speaker of "Jewish" (regardless of the particular dialect). If we want our teens to participate in this Jewish conversation as they are occupied with the task of identity building, Jewish education has to begin early and continue as long as possible. This assumes, of course, that being Jewish is important to you.

A secure identity, both Jewish and overall, is necessary in navigating today's increasingly pluralistic world. Our children are exposed on a daily basis to different ethnicities, different cultures, different religious traditions, and different expressions of values. The variety of options for living presented in a free society is simultaneously stimulating and intimidating. A Jewish education grounds children in their story, and provides a "home base" from which they can engage meaningfully in the world around them.

Some parents face serious obstacles in choosing Jewish education for their children. Cost alone excludes many (in all forms of Jewish schooling, not merely day schools), as does a child's need for special education services. Schools need to reach out to families who want to provide a Jewish education, but don't know how to go about it. Other parents don't know how to balance their own history (I didn't get a Jewish education and I turned out OK or I didn't like Hebrew school) with the larger question of how to help their children claim their place within the Jewish people. In these cases, a visit to the local Jewish school might reveal that "it's not your father's (or mother's) Hebrew school" anymore.

While institutions obsess about the continuity of Jewish people, most parents worry about their individual children. One answer to the question, "Why Jewish education?" is simply that, like Wonder Bread, it helps build strong (Jewish) bodies (and minds and souls) in many more than twelve ways.

Milken Scholarship Program Helps More than 300 Students Access Day School Education

Thanks to the continuing generosity of the Milken Family Foundation, and the support of scores of donors who responded to a matching gift opportunity, 325 students at 35 schools will, in 2008-2009 enjoy day school tuition scholarships of \$1,000-\$2,500, to a total of \$500,000. Since 1988, the Milken Family Foundation has provided tuition assistance, aggregating more than \$9 million through the Bureau of Jewish Education, to enable families to access Jewish day school education for their children.

For a fourth consecutive year, the Milken Family Foundation not only committed \$400,000 "outright" for this purpose, but challenged BJE donors to contribute \$50,000 to match an additional Foundation contribution of \$50,000 for student scholarships. The Bureau thanks the Milken Family Foundation and the following donors, whose gifts made it possible to meet the "Milken match" and assist additional students in enjoying the opportunity of a day school education this fall.

Mr. & Mrs. Albert Algaze
 Mr. & Mrs. Alfred Ashley
 Mr. & Mrs. Ben Barak
 Ms. Evelyn Baran
 Ms. Gloria Baran
 Mr. Milton Baran
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Baum
 Mr. & Mrs. Mark S. Berns
 Mr. & Mrs. David Berrent
 Dr. Leila Bronner &
 Rabbi Joseph Bronner
 Mr. & Mrs. Max Candiotty
 Mr. & Mrs. Sidney Caplan
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Endowing The Future

The BJE thanks the many individuals and families who have established named endowments in support of vital programs and services at the Bureau of Jewish Education. Endowments – beginning at \$25,000 and, currently, ranging to \$3 million – are recognized on the BJE’s Wall of Honor. These endowments include:

- Bernard & Mollie S. Levin Fund*
- Margolis Memorial Scholarship Fund*
- Hyman Bolotin Fund, Bolotin Fund Judaic Studies*
- Max & Lillian Candiotty Scholarship Fund*
- Beatrice Schultz Endowment Fund*
- Morris Knopow Memorial Fund*
- Simha & Sara Lainer Endowment for Scholarships*
- Louis & Dora Stollman Endowment Scholarship Fund in Memory of Beatrice & Nathan Stoller
- Simha & Sara Lainer Endowment for Programs*
- Dr. S. Jerome & Judith D. Tamkin Scholarship Fund
- Zwern March of the Living Fund in Memory of Sigi Zwern
- Tamara Ehrlich Scholarship Fund
- Mary & Clarence Sobole Israel Scholarship Fund
- Max & Anna Baran, Ben & Sarah Baran & Milton Baran Endowment Fund
- Evelyn Baran, Gloria Baran, Sheila & Alan Spiwak
- Dr. Samuel Dinin Endowment for Professional Development
- Bebe Feuerstein Simon Early Childhood Education Endowment
- Goldie D. Ivener Charitable Trust for the Jewish Community Library of Los Angeles
- Jeanine & Gerald Goldberg Endowment*
- Joe R. Spizman Family Fund for Pre-School Education

*Funds administered by the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles

To discuss endowment opportunities at the Bureau of Jewish Education, please contact **Stacey Barrett, (323) 761-8612** or sbarrett@bjela.org.



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