Eight graders and older, newcomers and existing members: spread the word that the SHJ HuJews Teen and College Conclave will convene April 12-14, 2013, at Butzel Conference Center, just an hour away from the Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

With this year’s theme “Pop Culture,” can you possibly imagine what your t-shirts will look like? Yes, fans, you may be wearing the latest fads or doing some flash dancing, or discussing the current stuff in entertainment, or beliefs that are already shared by many in your segment of society. But whatever you decide to do, one thing is for sure: you will find yourself making lifetime friends with others who may even turn out, some day, to be your college roommates.

Abby (CHJ, CT) says, “Conclave is always an amazing experience. It’s really awesome to be able to get to know people who are not only Jewish, but also Humanistic Jews. We have stimulating discussions, fun community service projects, and just time to hang out and get to know people. I look forward to Conclave every year to see my friends.”

Callie (Kol Hadash, IL) remembers, “I was sort of pushed into my first conclave by my parents and friends, and I was tentative about my first time. But I had an AMAZING time. I was able to meet other Humanistic Jews my own age and we had a great experience. It was because of Conclave that we were able to start a youth group at my temple and keep the momentum going.”

Alex (Birmingham Temple, MI), who has gone to the past six conclaves, thinks “it’s a great experience every time. It’s always a place where people are happy to see you and are open to your ideas. You get to have new experiences with people who have very similar ideas. Since there are not a lot of HuJews in the world, it’s wonderful to come together to affirm your beliefs, and your Jewish and Humanistic identities.”

Conclave coordinator AJ Chalom reveals that this is the 13th conclave she has organized. She calls it her bat mitzvah year. Come and celebrate with her. Also on hand will be rabbinic student Denise Handlarski and Rabbis Miriam Jerris and Jodi Kornfeld.

Registration — due February 14 — is online this year — http://tiny.cc/e4c4qw. Teen Registration is $240, with discounts offered for 8th graders and teen siblings; college student fee is $225. For questions or further information, contact hujews@gmail.com or info@SHJ.org.

“Conclave is an almost absurd amount of fun,” said conclave Matt (Birmingham Temple, MI). “You’ll experience more humanistic interaction than you’ll be able to stand, all day, every day, into the wee small hours of the night.”

Harriet Maza, SHJ editor
ORAYNU MADRIKHA SUPPORTS “GRO-AYNU”

The year 5773 will hopefully bring many wonderful new things. One of the new things at Oraynu is programming specifically geared for its members in their 20’s and 30’s. While a number of these young adults have attended Oraynu services and events and have even become members, it has been difficult for them to find each other.

This year, madrikha Denise Handlarski has started programming specifically geared to their location (downtown Toronto) and interests.

Nights include “Jews, Booze, and Views” events where we discuss controversial subjects over beer, a “Jews and Jazz” night at a local jazz club and Shabbat dinners at Denise’s home.

The idea is that we can connect both within and outside of Oraynu, develop this community, and ideally make Oraynu feel like a Jewish home for young adults.

Always a believer that getting into one another’s homes is great for community building, Denise is encouraging others to host events also. This group may become a nebulous network of Oraynuniks, their partners, their friends and beyond.

The initiative is funded through Oraynu’s “Gro-aynu” legacy planning and congregational growth fund/strategy. These are the Humanistic Jews who will continue the lovely traditions that Oraynu has helped to build.

Denise Handlarski, Madrikha, SHJ Board Designee, Toronto

Happy Anniversary
Machar CSHJ on your 35th
Or Adam CHJ on your 25th
CHJ, Sarasota on your 15th
Beth Chaverim HJC on your 10th

Mazel Tov!

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President: Andrea Friedlander
Executive Director: Bonnie Cousens
Rabbi: Miriam Jerris
Editor/Designer: Harriet Maza

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SHJ TEAMS RAISE MORE THAN $8,500 TO FIGHT CANCER

Three SHJ communities fielded teams in the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Light the Night Walks. SHJ joined other non-theistic organizations as an ally of the Foundation Beyond Belief in this effort to raise $1 million for cancer research, demonstrating that secularists can “do good without God.” The Birmingham Temple (MI), Congregation Beth Ami (CO), and Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation (IL) together raised more than $4,300, which through the generosity of the Steifel Freethought Foundation matching funds will provide more than $8,500 to help fight cancer.

Birmingham Temple team captain Audrey Pleasant said “We were delighted to work for this important cause and have the added benefit of shining a spotlight on the good works done by non-theistic people. We walked in honor and in memory of 20 Temple members and their loved ones, carrying a poster for each of these heroes as we proudly paraded behind our Birmingham Temple SHJ-FBB Team sign. It was a memorable, heart warming, experience that left us feeling empowered and exhilarated.”

AJ Chalom of Kol Hadash Congregation explained “When 6-year-old Sam, a student at my daughter’s school, was diagnosed with leukemia, I started following the daily trials of having a child with leukemia through the family’s blog. Sam’s family is inspiring. They have handled adversity with humor, strength, flexibility, and truth. I walked because of Sam, I raised funds because people are generous, I gave for science, research, and family support in the face of cancer and illness – all of these are at the core of my own humanist values.”

Madrikha Sheila Malcolm of Congregation Beth Ami walked in honor of her cousin Alan Miller who died of lymphoma at age 62. For her, the offer of matching funds “was truly a match.” Sheila and husband John attended a pre-walk secular gathering led by a local hospice chaplain – they found the event quietly moving as names of those being remembered were stated aloud. “Once the walk began,” said Sheila, “sadness turned to good cheer and community as the t-shirted groups began to intermingle.”

We thank all three of our SHJ teams and every one who contributed to their success.
As Jews we are taught that one of the tenets of Judaism is the giving of charity. Our Sunday School children drop their nickels, dimes, quarters and often dollars into a tsedaka box as they enter their classes. At the end of the year they vote on where that money will go. Usually they divide it among animal rescue groups and human helping hand groups. This is not a blind giving; the children know and write about their charities as something more than just an automatic exercise. The Beth Adam children, as committed Jews, learn early in their schooling, the meaning and the exercise of charity.

Likewise, at the bottom of every e-mail informing our adults of events, there is a reminder to bring food for Boca Helping Hands. BHH is a four-star rated charity providing food and assistance programs to instill dignity and break the cycle of dependence. Our basket for donations is usually filled with canned and packaged foodstuffs that help to feed hundreds at the BHH site and those who are homebound. We also have congregation members who make it a practice to work in the kitchens at BHH, preparing and serving food. Supplies and volunteers, and even a check now and then is appreciated.

Joan Cohn (pictured left) makes quilts for the children

Additionally, many members of the congregation are involved in supporting AVDA (Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse). Donations to their food pantry enables ADVA to provide meals to residents in their emergency shelter and transitional housing facility. AVDA accepts items for personal hygiene and infant care as well, including feminine products, diapers, wipes and children’s toys. To support this worthy operation we make periodic collections of these goods donated by Beth Adam members. Some of our talented members also hand-craft items such as quilts and clothing.

Congregation Beth Adam is not unique in its outreach to the less fortunate. The “poor box” has been a feature of houses of worship for centuries. The Salvation Army beats its drums and tambourines to support its soup kitchens and provide shelter. It is the obligation of a civilized society.

Some have said that tsedaka is the highest of all the commandments. Our Jewish heritage tells us the spiritual reward of giving to the poor is so great that a beggar actually does the giver a favor by allowing the giver the opportunity to perform tsedaka. In any case, as a Humanistic congregation, Beth Adam has concerned itself with many problems of the larger community. We do not have our own “poor box” and at times we have struggled to stay afloat financially, but apart from our balance sheet, our members are to be commended for their concern for others. If our only reward is the inner joy that comes from giving, let us continue to be a JOYOUS bunch.

Irwin Cohn, President, Boca Raton, FL

SHJ ORGANIZES BOYCOTT OF STORES SELLING ASSAULT RIFLES

Our hearts are broken as we grapple with the loss of 26 lives at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Across the U.S., in schools, theaters, and malls, from Virginia Tech, to Columbine, and now to Newtown, the senseless violence has continued. Committed to taking responsibility for improving our world, SHJ believes it is time for us to come together to demand a change in our gun laws.

SHJ has adopted a resolution calling for a ban on the sale of assault rifles and high capacity magazines as well as increased efforts to prevent people from buying guns through unlicensed dealers without a background check. SHJ does not believe that the right to bear arms as embodied in the Second Amendment includes the right for citizens to own military-grade assault rifles and high capacity magazines. The resolution recognizes “that the response to such mass shootings is complex and must be approached with a multi-faceted solution that includes better mental health treatment and screening as well as a society committed to less glorification of violence.” Read the full resolution at http://www.shj.org/AssaultWeaponBan.html.

Recognizing that the huge profitability from the sales of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines provides a disincentive for retailers to remove these items from their shelves, SHJ is calling for a boycott of retailers who sell assault rifles and high capacity magazines. Sign the petition at http://tiny.cc/k3tpqw and pledge to boycott retailers that continue to sell these weapons and patronize those that have removed such weapons from their shelves.
ADAT CHAVERIM HOSTS STAND-OUT SPEAKERS

Professor Phil Zuckerman, whose visit last year at Rosh Hashana was a rousing success, returned once again to speak at this year’s Rosh Hashana celebration as well. Zuckerman most recently authored *Society Without God: What the Least Religious Nations can tell us About Contentment* (New York University Press, 2008). He is probably best known for founding the Secular Studies program at Pitzer College, in Pomona, California, the first program of its kind.

On a lighter note, Professor Zuckerman is a huge music fan and maintains some interesting music links on his faculty webpage, one of which is a list of greatest songs for atheists and agnostics: http://www.pitzer.edu/academics/faculty/zuckerman/songs-atheists.html

We were also happy to have local legend Evan Clark as our Yom Kippur speaker. As a student at Cal Lutheran University, he accomplished the impossible: he became the first student to be named president of his school’s Secular Student Alliance. Then he went on to become his school’s student body president! Even more remarkable is that he accomplished all this at a Lutheran university and was able to convince that university to host a Secular Student Alliance conference.

Clark currently chairs the national Secular Student Alliance Board of Directors. He is also co-organizer of the Humanist Community of Thousand Oaks. Through his involvement in the secular student movement, he has worked with SHJ ordained rabbi, Greg Epstein, of the Harvard Humanist Chaplaincy and has been very involved in the national humanist movement. Below is a link to a YouTube clip in which he talks about his experiences in the secular student movement.http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bT9M2uLVJ3o

Each year, Adat Chaverim anticipates the High Holidays as a time to invite prospective members to the congregation. Bringing in new members is a pleasure and an important responsibility for every member. Our congregation’s future depends on new members! Our campaign is called “Every One Recruit One.”

With secularism and humanism as growing trends in American society, Adat Chaverim members do not underestimate a prospective member’s desire to bring their affiliation more in line with their unspoken beliefs. Current members are asked to make every effort to recruit just one new member and contribute to the success of this haimish and wonderful Valley CHJ. We ask friends, too, to direct people our way: http://humanisticjudaismla.org/contactus.html. Thanks so much in helping to grow our congregation!

David Borden, President, CA

EXCITING, NEW CELEBRATIONS AT CHJ, FAIRFIELD

Each year, we revise our High Holiday observances, sometimes small tweaks, sometimes substantial overhauls. This year’s services were very well received. Our new Rosh Hashana service, written by Cary Shaw, with editing consultant Marilyn Brownstein, featured Mountain of Time: a view of the universe, Jewish history, and our role in it. Also added was a Call to Action, quoting Albert Einstein and Louis Brandeis, and the reading of the Mishna’s account of Abraham and the idols. David Niose, President of the American Humanist Association, was the evening speaker.

A new practice at the Yom Kippur Memorial Service was Jean Franklin’s reading of names of bygone congregation members. A new Yom Kippur Young People’s Service was prepared by Jenny Ginsberg, Lucy Katz, and others. The services are available from Cary. The Yom Kippur address by Fred Ury, congregation member and Past President of the Connecticut Bar Association, will be posted on our website www.humanisticjews.org

A special celebration of SHJ’s Humanistic Jewish Role Model and Nobel Prize winner Richard Feynman, was presented by David Shafer. This funny and enlightening program on a famous iconoclast is heavily illustrated with photos and New Yorker cartoons. Dave has made it available on the SHJ’s online Resource for Congregations.

This year, a new A-Frame Poster (right) has made its debut, helping members and guests find our program and celebrations.

Old hand and new President, Jane Campbell, is making her mark with thoughtful encouragement of CHJ.

Cary Shaw, SHJ Board Designee, CT
MACHAR CELEBRATES 35 YEARS OF SECULAR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

Machar, the Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism, celebrated its 35th anniversary on September 8, 2012.

Sixty people attended the event, which included a silent auction and fun(d) builders (sign-ups for activities like klezmer and dinner at a member’s home, a genealogy session, or an origami class given by a fifth grader) as well as a beautiful slide presentation of our history and a delicious assortment of appetizers.

Funds were raised to support our commitment to include all families who wish to participate in our programs, regardless of ability to pay.

Speakers included Rabbi Binyamin Biber, Madrikh Michael Prival, President Nadine Wettstein, and Machar founders Jules Abrams and Henrietta Wexler. There were letters from founders Millie and Joe Goodman, Ann Black of Michigan, and Mary Perica of Israel. Remarks by young adult havura chair Betsy Kolmus and teen Adam Gold added a broader generational perspective.

We received a certificate of achievement from the Society for Humanistic Judaism and MP4 greetings from Rabbi Miriam Jerris and Executive Director Bonnie Cousens.

Former President Donna Bassin created a terrific print program with personal stories of founders and other Machar members.

T-shirts commemorating the event promoted “Unorthodox Judaism” on the back, and some of us have already gotten interested comments while wearing them.

Machar b’nei mitzvah program graduate Alejandra Rodriguez-Gitler designed our anniversary logo, which appears on the t-shirt, the program, and other materials. A good time was had by all, and we were pleased that a reporter from the Washington Jewish Week covered the event in its September 19 edition (http://tinyurl.com/Machar35).

Marlene Cohen, SHJ Board Designee, Kelly Hand, administrator; Washington D.C.

BALTIMORE JEWISH CULTURAL CHAVURAH PERFORMS TASHLIKH WITH A PAPER SHREDDER

Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah’s High Holiday observances drew more than 30 people for each event, consisting of members, non-members who had attended previously, and newcomers — a sizable group for us.

At Rosh Hashana, tashlikh was accomplished with the aid of a paper shredder rather than rushing water. No, we didn’t empty our pockets. We fed in hoped-for changes on paper.

For Yom Kippur, we heard a recording of “Kol Nidrei” not by Cantor Yosele Rosenblatt as usual but rather surprisingly by Johnny Mathis!

Later we participated in a positive “al khet” with the aid of a parachute. Here’s what happened: everyone formed a large circle, holding the edge of the parachute. A list of positive behaviors we may have engaged in over the past year was read by a leader. As each one was read, the parachute was raised to the ceiling. Those to whom that positive behavior applied crossed to the other side of the room as the parachute slowly descended. No behavior applied to everyone, so there were people still holding and raising the parachute. Several participants spontaneously called out additional positive behaviors. Definitely not your parents’ “al khet.”

Bob Jacobson, Co-President, MD

Join Your State Chapter of the Secular Coalition for America http://secular.org/states
KAHAL B’RAIRA CELEBRATES IN SPITE OF THE WEATHER

We all have our stories about perseverance in spite of the weather. So what happens in Boston when the weather makes the standard Sukkot celebration a washout? Here, at KB, we simply adapt. A quick reorientation placed our sukka in the library of our school.

Members entering the building were greeted by stacks of plywood, lattice, 2x4’s and 7th graders with electric drills, learning tool safety. Due to a mistake of the architect, the cross pieces across the top were too short. But the smart 7th graders knew how to adapt, here, too. They suggested using the short pieces diagonally. Innovative and functional!

Sandra Mayo, our Sunday school principal, used our sukka in teaching the classes about the holiday. After seeing our big one, students of one class then created their own table top versions. Once the picnic took place, the moveable structure was then disassembled and returned to its storage place in the garage of the Katz/Forman family where it is currently resting peacefully.

Thus ended our intense holiday observances, which also included two Rosh Hashana services and three Yom Kippur services (plus two Break the Fasts). Conditions for those events? From hot and humid to overcast and chilly; but invariably joyous at coming together and thoughtful in self-reflection. Throughout the holiday season our light burned brightly.

Jon Levine, SHJ Board Designee, MA

BETH CHAVERIM RABBI PLANS WEEK OF HOPE, DELIVERS INVOCATION AT ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

With the help of Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld, a consortium of local churches and synagogues came together for a Week of Hope, September 2-9, during which volunteers participated in a variety of projects to benefit their communities.

Projects involved creating Thanksgiving cards for seniors, making fleece blankets, singing at neighborhood nursing homes, cleaning up local parks, and collecting food and books for those in need. Beth Chaverim hosted three events: making fleece toys for a local animal shelter that included a visit from two shelter dogs; baking for members of the local police and fire departments; and readying their school for fall programs.

Students made cards for an organization called Super Sibs. The cards provide good wishes to the siblings of seriously ill children to keep their spirits up and give them attention when their sibs, logically enough, are getting most of the attention. Students also designed and photographed a picture for the Helping Hands committee to send to those in need. Each student received a sticker that said, “I made a difference today.”

Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld, Deerfield, IL
We don’t hear from our individual members very often, but when we do, it’s usually in response to a position the Society has taken on social issues, such as our recent positions on school vouchers, workers’ rights, and conscience clauses. Sometimes the responses are supportive, and sometimes they’re angry. I’d like to take this opportunity to explain why the Society is taking positions on these issues at all, and then to tell you about the new criteria the Board of Directors adopted at its October meeting.

There are several reasons why the Society takes positions on contemporary social issues:

First, the Society’s Mission and Vision Statements (adopted by the Board in April 2010) include providing a voice for Humanistic Jews and increasing the visibility of the Society (and thus Humanistic Judaism). Taking positions on important social issues, especially when other organizations (both Jewish and secular) are speaking up, is one way to have a voice on the national stage and gain visibility and recognition as a legitimate fifth branch of Judaism. Increased visibility also helps to bring new members into our affiliated communities.

Second, based on the responses we received from the membership survey we conducted a few years ago, we know that most of our members want the Society to speak up for our Humanistic Jewish values.

However, since social issues can be controversial and/or political, the Society needs to be mindful that the positions we take are representative of our membership. The only way for us to be truly representative is to limit our positions to “the glue that binds us together” as Humanistic Jews. The SHJ Board believes that this glue is limited to issues that threaten the separation of church and state; issues of Jewish identity and culture; and issues for which there is consensus (e.g., anti-bullying, anti-violence). Based on these principles, the Board adopted the following guidelines:

Criteria for Selection of Issues

Are we advocating evidence-based policy solutions that promote the core ethical values of freedom, dignity and self-esteem for every human being? This is a prerequisite. If so, then the resolution must relate to at least one of the criteria below:

- separation of church and state, or
- Jewish identity/culture, or
- a position with which an overwhelming majority of the SHJ are likely to agree.

To illustrate how these guidelines would work, positions supporting reproductive choice and gay marriage, and opposing conscience clauses and school prayer would satisfy the separation of church and state prong of the test since these policies are religiously motivated.

Our recent position urging the London Olympics to commemorate the murdered 1972 Israeli Olympians would satisfy the Jewish identity/culture prong of the test. And positions against bullying, violence, and hate speech would satisfy the overwhelming majority agreement third prong of the test. In contrast, for example, positions on tax reform or health care, while arguably related to our core ethical values, would not satisfy any of the three prongs of the test.

Going forward, I am confident that these guidelines will give the Society leeway to continue to be a voice on the national stage, but only on issues on which it is appropriate for the Society to speak on behalf of its membership.
Kol Shalom observes new beginnings in new spaces, celebrates Hanukka as a community

Kol Shalom highlights include our Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur observances, each attended by about one hundred people. Both celebrations featured programs created by Mary Raskin and the Ritual Committee and music from the Music Makers led by Nancy Lezak.

Live recordings of two of the songs are available for listening on the web: “Ts’reekheem” (“Avinu Malkaynu”) and Shalom L’Yisrael. Our cantor for Yom Kippur was David Maier. He and cellist Jerry Bobbe performed Max Bruch’s “Kol Nidre.” Walter Hellman was the featured speaker at Rosh Hashana with his topic, “Adapting Prayer to Humanistic Judaism.” Karen Peterson was our shofar blower. Karen has taken over from her father, Larry, and continues the great tradition. Both observances were held at the local Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.

Kol Shalom held a combined open house and Sukkot, October 1, in its newly available patio space. For almost 10 years Kol Shalom has had an office and meeting room in a dignified older business building in Hillsdale, Oregon. Fairly recently we moved to a new larger suite which has the building outdoor patio immediately adjacent to the rooms. An energetic beautification committee fixed up the patio and built a sukkah, which was used for the holiday and the open house. The weather was beautiful and the event, well attended.

We’ve re-started our children’s education program with about 20 students and three teachers, all members. Our new 55” TV screen is well used for Jewish movie nights and community founder, Jane Goldhamer’s exercise class.

Each year Kol Shalom has an amazing Hanukka party at the Unitarian Fellowship, with about 100 people attending, including new families checking us out. A number of our members with kids in the school had their first contact with Kol Shalom at this party.

The party lasts about two hours and is organized by the children’s ed program. The main elements of the party are a performance of some kind by the students, games and activities for kids, a group lighting of the menorahs, group singing of Hanukka songs and latkes.

This year, we kept our favorites — candle-lighting, singing, and latkes — and tried some new things that worked well...in particular, what we call the “Great Hanukka Pageant,” where the Children’s Ed kids get to do their thing. Presented in 3 segments, the production was great. First up, the youngest classes sang songs together. Their teacher had them write new verses to the dreidel song, with each verse explaining the letter and what to do, illustrated with large drawings they made of the letters. Two mitzvah students presented “Everything You Wanted to Know About Hanukka in One Minute — featuring one minute on “Macabees” and “menorah.” The Pageant concluded with a mini talent show by past and present students with Hanukka-themed music. One act was a family band including the visiting grandfather.

The latke part is quite a production but it’s always popular. We ask people to bring their favorite latkes already made and we re-heat them in the major size oven available to us at the Fellowship. Of course they are never as good as fresh out of the pan (Fortunately I get to eat quite a few of them that way as my wife makes them for the party :-), but they are still very popular as we serve them with all the trimmings.

Walt Hellman, SHJ Board Designee, Oregon.
CONGRATULATIONS!

TO THE PRESIDENTS & LEADERS
OF OUR AFFILIATED COMMUNITIES:

Arizona  Mark Tallan, Or Adam
         Marshall Rubin, Secular Humanist Jewish Circle

California  David Borden, Adat Chaverim
          Gary Zarnow, Kahal Am
          Gladys Perez-Mendez, Kol Hadash
          Rosalie Gottfried, Orange County SHJ
          Karen Knecht, The Pacific Community

Colorado  Jon Budoff, Beth Ami

Connecticut  Jane Campbell, CHJ, Fairfield County
          D.C.  Nadine Wettstein, Machar

Florida  Irwin Cohn, Cong. Beth Adam
         Susan Friedman, CHJ, Sarasota
         Paula Creed, Humanistic Jewish Havurah of SW Florida

Illinois  Robin Chessick, Beth Chaverim
         Sue Talman, Kol Hadash

Maryland  Fred Pincus, Bob Jacobson, Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah

Massachusetts  Ellen Sugarman, Paul Ricktor, Kahal B’raira

Michigan  Les Kutinsky, Birmingham Temple

Minnesota  Richard Logan, Or Emet

New Jersey  Steve Sussman, Morris County CHJ

New York  Robert Goldstein, Beth Haskalah
          Ellen C. Weiman, The City Congregation
          Joan Marcus, Kol Haverim, Finger Lakes CHJ
          Dmitry Turovsky, Westchester CHJ

North Carolina  Jenn Sessler, Kol Haskalah

Oregon  Myra Himmelfarb, Kol Shalom, CHJ

Ohio  Ellen Rapkin, Humanistic Jewish Havurah of Columbus

Washington  Paul Grekin, Secular Jewish Circle

Canada  Louise Sherman, Oraynu

EVERYTHING’S CROPPING UP GENERATIONAL IN ILLINOIS

The summer and fall have been a celebration of generations at Kol Hadash of Illinois. On July 20, the congregation honored our rabbi emeritus, Rabbi Daniel Friedman, on the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination. Rabbi Friedman was honored by congregants representing each decade and era of his rabbinate. The congregation has compiled a book of memories, stories, and pictures for Rabbi Friedman.

The High Holidays were also generational. Our Rosh HaShana was ushered in by our shofar blowers extraordinaire, Jim Jacobs and his son Andy. Prior to his departure for college, Jim’s son Steven had accompanied his father! Jim’s parents (and Andy and Steven’s grandparents) watched with pleasure, and mom Lisa sang in the choir.

The Kol Hadash choir, too, presented a generational first: three generations of men in a family sang together in the choir. Richard Hirsch was joined by his son David about eighteen years ago, but this year, David’s son Jonah joined the singers. The three appeared at the Yom Kippur day service in garb that celebrated their family ties (photo above)!

David Hirsch, Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation

JOIN THE HERITAGE SOCIETY
Ensure Your Legacy
Remember SHJ In Your Estate Plan

You can help ensure the future of Humanistic Judaism by remembering SHJ in your estate plan. Planned gifts can be made through wills, trusts, life insurance, retirement plan beneficiary options, and the SHJ’s annuity, the Pooled Income Fund. No gift is too small and every gift helps. To ensure your legacy, contact Bonnie Cousens at 248-478-7610 or bonniecousens@shj.org.
What would our communities be like if we concentrated on and celebrated what we’ve done well rather than emphasized the negatives or parts that needed to be fixed? Could we improve if we concentrated on the good things we’ve done? Experience tells us that focusing on strengths and past successes reminds people of the talent that already exists in the community. It empowers people to once again involve themselves in the group.

There is an approach to organizational problem solving called Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry abandons the problem/solution (something has to be fixed) approach in favor of appreciating what already exists within the community. The assumptions underlying Appreciative Inquiry follow:

**Something Works in Every Community**
When reviewing the status of a community, start with the question, “What were the successes? What has the community accomplished that you would like to share with others? After a few minutes of talking about what has worked, you can feel the positive energy increasing in the group. Members are smiling and reminding each other of a great program they held: the wonderful Passover seder, or book discussion, or just the way they worked together.

**Asking Questions Influences the Group**
Time after time, I notice that the mood becomes more positive after a board session where I ask those in attendance questions to discover more about them. I have shown that I am interested in what they have done. I care about their future. They are proud to tell me what they have accomplished. They have taken time to think and now, even talk about the next steps. They have become upbeat and joyous.

**What We Focus On and Say, Becomes Reality**
We create our own reality through the use of specific and positive language and positive intention. This may sound odd but it works. If we talk about how wonderful a program was, we will remain with that feeling of “wonderful” and it will spread and multiply like an infectious laugh. When negativity and kvetching occur the mood becomes depressed; it becomes difficult to garner the energy it takes to move forward and engage people.

**The Future Looks Rosy**
The future is less frightening when we carry our past successes into it with us. We can restore confidence when we re-experience what we did that worked well. Different from nostalgia about the good times, this evaluation of the best we’ve done can carry us forward and help us overcome the normal response of fear that change often engenders.

**Value Differences**
It is not always easy to value and celebrate differences. Change is scary enough in and of itself, but when it is accompanied by a lot of differing opinions, it can shake the strongest of foundations. If differences are valued, however, and used as opportunities for creative thinking, then a barrier or pitfall can become a force for community growth.

Appreciative Inquiry provides a positive approach to change and growth. It mollifies our fear of the future and paves the way to hope and success.
Humanistic Jews are independent thinkers and actors: a minority within a minority. Often we have developed our values and celebrate our Judaism differently than our relatives, our friends, or our neighbors. Our independence, plus our affiliation with our congregations, communities and the Society, is one of our greatest strengths.

In surveys, we predominantly cite a desire for Jewish community consistent with a humanistic philosophy as the reason we join congregations. Another shared value is the desire to make Humanistic Judaism public and visible as an alternative choice for those seeking a welcoming community. But there is a paradox. As self-defined independents, many of us are “non-joiners.” For many, membership in our Jewish community is an exception to a “go-it-alone” lifestyle.

Just as our individual congregation helps connect us to one another, the Society for Humanistic Judaism helps those communities to connect with each other and to raise our profile in the U.S. and Canada.

I’m writing this as chair of the Society’s Finance and Development Committee. “Development” refers both to the growth of the SHJ financial resources and to fostering Humanistic Judaism. The fundraising part is self-explanatory, though I will return to it.

First, think about the development aspect of fostering Humanistic Judaism as the programs, initiatives, and outreach efforts that foster the growth of Humanistic Judaism. I’d like to remind you that the Society, in recent months, made these things happen:

- SHJ welcomed new communities to the Society, bringing our affiliate membership to 29;
- HJ’s HuJews Teen and College Conclave in Washington, DC last spring was a highlight of the year, with more than 70 attendees;
- SHJ participated in the Washington Reason Rally last March, making our presence known at a gathering of more than 30,000 people;
- SHJ spoke out against school vouchers and against bigotry toward American Muslims, and for a commemoration of the Munich Olympians at the 2012 Olympics.

These aren't things the Society buys — they were made possible by dedicated, hard work on the part of volunteers and SHJ’s small staff. But developments like these wouldn't happen without funds for staff, meeting places, communications, and all other necessary programs and resources. Financially, SHJ is running a small deficit this year. We will be on a better financial basis as the economy improves. But only if our members make voluntary contributions can we grow and be more effective.

In December, you received a letter asking you to contribute to the Society. Whether you're a "joiner" or a "non-joiner," if you haven’t yet responded, please make a contribution today, whatever its size. It's your opportunity to nurture what we have in common.
SHJ opposed “conscience clauses” that exempt religiously-affiliated institutions from generally applicable requirements mandating reproductive healthcare services to individuals or employees.

SHJ adopted a resolution opposing school vouchers, recognizing that vouchers mainly support religious schools.

SHJ supported the rights of workers to earn a fair wage and enjoy safe and reasonable working conditions as an expression of their human dignity.

SHJ joined the Interfaith Alliance in a broad coalition of 42 secular and religious organizations that sent a letter to Reps. Michele Bachmann, Trent Franks, Louie Gohmert, Thomas Rooney, and Lynn Westmoreland protesting the representatives’ recent letters regarding prominent American Muslim individuals and organizations.

SHJ affiliates participated in the Light the Night Walks, joining other secular organizations in raising funds for cancer research while demonstrating that people can “do good without God.”

SHJ issued a statement opposing violence and hate speech.

SHJ called for an end to all kinds of bullying, intimidation, and harassment, especially when motivated out of disability, handicap, physical attribute, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, cultural expression or ethnic background.

SHJ joined an amicus brief in the Third Circuit Court of Appeals opposing the Boy Scouts’ discriminatory policies with respect to sexual orientation and religious belief.

And, as we entered 2013, SHJ adopted a resolution calling for a ban on assault rifles and high-capacity magazines. We can predict some issues that will engage us in 2013. Many already are part of public discourse, including: the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, women’s health care and a woman’s right to choose, immigration, public education, same-sex marriage rights, hate crimes, and gun control. As Humanistic Jews, we will continue to give voice to our values on issues that concern us.
2011-2012 ANNUAL CAMPAIGN
The Society for Humanistic Judaism is pleased to thank the contributors to the 2011-2012 fundraising campaign.

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Support Humanistic Judaism, remember a loved one.
SHJ Tributes for every occasion provide the programs we need.

To Roberta & Walter Hellman
Congratulations on the birth of
Your grandson, Simon Marc
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens
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In memory of
Michael & Devera Witkin
From Jay & Marsha Gamerman

To Phoebe Telsner
In memory of your husband, Gene
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens
Miriam Jerris

To Ruth & Paul Kadosh
In memory of your mother
From The Society for Humanistic Judaism
Bonnie & Mark Cousens

To Lynne Master & Family
In memory of Karen
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Alison & Adam Chalom
Miriam Jerris

To B.J. & Richard Saul
Congratulations on the birth of
Your grandson, Brenton Graham
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens
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In memory of my brother, Dr. Bert Rettner
From Faith & Steve Oremland

To Stephanie Blum & Family
In memory of your grandmother
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens
Miriam Jerris & Stephen Stawicki

To Naomi & Julius Harwood
In memory of your brother, Elliot Beitner
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To Patty & Allan Becker
Congratulations on the birth of your granddaughters
From Bonnie & Mark Cousens
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To Julie Becker & Alan Silverleib
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Congratulations on your Lifetime Achievement Award
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To Deb & David Golden
Congratulations on your son's marriage
From The Society of Humanistic Judaism
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To Karen & Gary Levy
Congratulations on the birth of Your grandson, Noah
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A tribute lets friends know you care.

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Return to: SHJ, 28611 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48334
Humanorah Is Going Green

The SHJ member newsletter, Humanorah, is going green. No, SHJ is not switching from blue to green ink for your paper Humanorah. We’re going digital. No longer will we sacrifice a tree to publish our member newsletter. No longer will we add to the papers filling your mailbox. Now you will be able to read the news of the SHJ and our affiliated communities online.

But, if you prefer curling up in your favorite chair to read Humanorah, you will still be able to do so. Just contact SHJ (info@shj.org) and tell us you want to receive your Humanorah in the mail and we will continue to send you the paper edition.

This will be the last print edition mailed to every member. If we don’t hear from you, you will receive an emailed link to the online edition beginning with our next issue. It is up to you to make the choice: digital or print.

SHJ UPCOMING EVENTS

February 8-10, 2013  IISHJ Seminar at MACHAR, Washington, DC. Contact: info@iishj.org.
March 3, 2013  RABBI ADAM CHALOM VISIT TO MILWAUKEE, WI. Contact: rabbimiriamjerris@shj.org.
March 7, 2013  RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO ORLANDO, FL. Contact: rabbimiriamjerris@shj.org.
March 10, 2013  SHJ SOUTH FLORIDA REGIONAL CONFERENCE, NAPLES, FL. Contact: rabbimiriamjerris@shj.org.
April 12-14, 2013  HUJEWS TEEN & YOUNG ADULT CONCLAVE 2013, Butzel Conference Center, Michigan. Contact: SHJ, info@shj.org or info@hujews.org, (248) 478-7610.
April 19-21, 2013  RABBI BINYAMIN BIBER VISIT TO SECULAR JEWISH CIRCLE OF PUGET SOUND, Wa, Contact: Judi Gladstone, judiglad2@gmail.com, (425) 774-6711.
May 2-5, 2013  RABBI JEFFREY FALICK VISIT TO BETH AMI, COLORADO CONGREGATION FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM, CO. Contact Sheila Malcolm, smalcolm280@gmail.com.
June 7-9, 2013  IISHJ Seminar at ORAYNU, TORONTO, ON. Contact: info@iishj.org.