Exciting times and more are ahead of us. But I am not referring to the presidential election! The SHJ has embarked on the work of a revitalization, so that we can “develop a new vision based on how best to serve and expand our membership market, increase our visibility and create strategies that will lead us to a more successful and sustainable Society.”

The board approved the hiring of Alan Levy’s Goaltrac organization, a consulting firm, to help the SHJ conduct its Vision Project. The SHJ established a Vision Project Committee (VPC) and a Transition Team (TT) to work with Alan and the Board to develop recommendations. Alan conducted a survey, interviews and a focus group to help us evaluate the organization, to understand the environment as it relates to the “nones”, and how we can outreach to them and to have access to best practices used by comparable institutions that address shared problems (e.g., Unitarian Universalist Association,). This work resulted in Goaltrac’s final report submitted to the VPC in January.

The VPC and the TT held a teleconference with the full board to discuss the final report and its recommendations. The VPC and the TT had their first teleconference in early February which resulted in the decision to recommend that the Mission and Vision Statements be revisited and that an executive director be hired. The Team will meet again to discuss recommendations for Communication and Marketing, Finance and Fund Development, and the role of the Executive Committee. Questions to be addressed include, for example, shall we conduct a rebranding effort, do we need to re-evaluate our technology capabilities, and what should our fund-raising strategy look like? Using the results of the survey, interviews, focus group, Goaltrac’s final report, and discussion with the full board, the team will develop additional recommendations for Education, Ethical Concerns, and the HuJews.

Recommendations will be circulated to the board prior to the April board meeting to give the board representatives time to discuss the recommendations with the members of their communities and provide feedback to the TT. We hope to achieve consensus so that we can use time at the board meeting in small committees to begin setting tasks for accomplishing the agreed upon goals and objectives.

This is a very exciting time for the SHJ. We are looking to a new and brighter future with more transparency and more opportunity to bring our movement to those who do not know they have a voice in Secular Humanistic Judaism and to strengthen our relationship with our members and communities who share our passion and commitment to ensure the future of Humanistic Judaism. The success of this new vision requires that we all work to support the recommendations and achieve the goals that we developed together.

Faith Oremland
We are delighted to introduce you to Kate Forest and to welcome her into our community!

Kate holds a Master’s in Social Work from Columbia University, and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She has worked with kids and families in a variety of settings, always finding joy in traveling beside young people on the path of self-discovery.

About her first conclave she reports: “I returned from Chicago with questions and answers. I accepted the responsibility of coordinating the Youth Conclave without ever meeting anyone who had been to the event. I had no idea what to expect. Would the young people be invested in the events of the weekend? How would they welcome first timers? What would we spend our downtime doing? Would any real learning take place?

“These questions were quickly answered when I was greeted with warm smiles and the energy of students that I should never doubt. Not only was the level of inclusion and involvement impressive, they were also just a lot of fun to hang out with. Sharing deep ethical conversations about public displays of religion and living a generous life is made so much better by eating Mega Stuffed Oreos.

“There is no question of the commitment of the Reps, and I am so excited to start planning 2017 DC! And when I was offered hugs at my departure, I knew they were authentic displays of warmth.

My questions now have less of an anxious quality and more wonderment. What programs will the youth develop? How can we make it even better than this last weekend? And will I be amazed at the growth and maturity a short year can bring for these kids? (The answer to that one is YES).”

Please see the Conclave photo on page 16.
As you may know, the Society for Humanistic Judaism undertook a survey of our members last September. Now, the survey results are guiding us as we work to clarify and crystallize our mission. Increasingly, we understand that the most powerful way to publicize the SHJ is to promote its value as a movement.

We know from the 2013 Pew survey that many thousands of people are “Jewish, but…” – that is, Jewish by birth, background, marriage or family but not interested in worship. Typically, they aren’t aware of Secular Humanistic Judaism. Nonetheless, we do exist. We are a movement of several thousand people who draw on their Jewish culture, history, ethical values, education and ritual while staying completely sincere in their secular beliefs.

Over the past six months, many SHJ members, plus officers and rabbis, have spent dozens of hours talking in person and by phone. We will continue to involve more and more people in this conversation. In my opinion, we’ve become more aware that our focus should be:

- Clearly stating the philosophy and values of Secular Humanistic Judaism
- Doing more outreach to get the fact of the movement’s existence to the widest possible audience
- Demonstrating the value of connecting and belonging to a movement of Secular and Humanistic Jews, through nearby communities and the national organization.

Our philosophy is distinct. See, most recently, Richard Logan’s eloquent statement elsewhere in this *Humanorah*. But this philosophy is hard to market. We’re working to find better ways to deliver that message by social media, through our website, and by word-of-mouth. We are realizing that the movement and its values – its activities and resources – are what matter. SHJ’s vision, roughly stated, is to strengthen, spread and sustain Secular Humanistic Judaism. It is the philosophy that SHJ promotes that is most important to our constituency. Supporting SHJ through donations, membership, by actively volunteering or in any other way supports that philosophy.

We are a movement of “Judaism Beyond God” (as Sherwin Wine wrote). Our value is in connecting Secular Humanistic Jews with one another, as individuals or as members of local congregations, havurot and communities, without any supernatural references. As to specifics, consider these photo captions from the shj.org home page:

- “Humanistic Judaism: Believing What We Say, Saying What We Believe”
- “Building Humanistic Congregations Today, Creating Continuity for Our Children for the Future”
- “Jewish Holidays: Connecting to Our Heritage, Creating Meaning for Today”
- “Culturally Jewish Ceremonies, Meeting Human Needs”

This is Humanistic Judaism.

*Larry Lawrence, President of SHJ*
An important part of the evaluation and re-organizing process currently underway has been a survey of members and prospective members, conducted through Alan Levy of Goaltrac, the Society’s consultant. Emails went out to all members inviting participation and this resulted in a healthy number of responses. Our members care and they have a lot to say. The results are guiding the planning and decision making.

A total of 1,094 respondents answered the survey, which was conducted last fall. The response rate of about twenty-five percent is considered a good response rate and will provide useful information in moving ahead. Respondents included 501 community members, 65 individual members, 331 former members, and 197 prospective members.

More than fifty percent of the respondents rated a belief in the philosophy of Secular Humanistic Judaism as most positive. Most respondents agreed that the SHJ was important to the movement.

There were two clusters of support for SHJ programs; ethical action and educational pursuits. Many people joined because of their interest in ethical issues. The Board, during an exercise responding to the survey results, indicated that outreach was one of the most important issues.

Former members left most often because of life circumstances. This was followed by the cost of membership and the value of programs and services. Leaving after the B’nai Mitzvah celebration followed as an additional reason. Prospective members are interested in SHJ but overall do not consider joining. While most of our members want to be in a community of like-minded people, prospects are more interested in being part of a small informal group.

**SWOT!**

Survey findings include elements expressed by the acronym SWOT, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The Vision Team appointed by the SHJ Board is analyzing them so as to formulate practical recommendations for board consideration. What do we do to make the most of our strengths and opportunities and to address our weaknesses as well as the threats to our growth and success?

**Strengths and Weaknesses** are the current internal attributes reflected by the survey results. Some of our strengths include members’ passion for the movement and a strong willingness to support our various organizations. The mission and vision continue to be meaningful.

Weaknesses include that our philosophy is hard to market, our declining funding is primarily dues-based, and the congregational model only works for some.

**Opportunities and Threats** are external and future oriented.

Fundraising could be focused on Planned Giving or Wills since much of the membership is aging. Targeting our marketing efforts toward various popular social media is another opportunity. The importance of social action to our members is an opportunity to engage our members more fully.

Threats include our aging membership, a belief that national dues are not worth it, and our volunteer based national and local organizations are stretched thin. Survey results also indicated the need to consider the decline in organized religion and that the congregational model does not work for everyone.

Mary Raskin
**Editor’s Comment** — When we requested community contributions to this issue of Humanorah, we tried something new: We asked you to share your challenges and how you are meeting them. We believed that this would fit the Society’s current self-examination and search for new approaches, and that this would also help the board use the consultant’s recommendations. Some of you sent your usual lively reports of your activities, and some of you dug deeper. Thank you, all. We promise that we will ask you again for more.

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**Oraynu Tackles Attrition**

One of our biggest challenges, like in most communities, is attrition. At Oraynu we are hoping to address this by having people be integrated more quickly in our community. We are doing this through a multi-pronged approach. In terms of programming, we have held a series of forum-events at which members can have their say on issues of our time. Dying with Dignity and Israel are recent examples. We are also holding brunches with the rabbi for people to get to know our new rabbi better and also to foster more intimate engagement between members. At our programs, we use a "buddy" system; in addition, we encourage committee members be proactive in welcoming and befriending newer people.

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**GRANOLA BARS IN CARS**

Over the past few years, Adat Chaverim, Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, Los Angeles, has developed a range of adult education programs centered on what it means to be a Humanist and a Jew. These include guest lectures, film screenings, a book club, Humanistic Torah study, and a class on varied topics. However, unlike our cultural school curriculum, which integrates environmental and ethical action projects, our adult programs lack an action component. Our conversations are wonderfully intellectual and often inspiring, but we sometimes struggle to translate the values we talk about into direct and tangible action.

Recently, we instituted a modest campaign to address hunger and homelessness in our region. Adults in our community are encouraged to keep granola bars in their cars to give to panhandlers who frequent our busy intersections. This simple act of loving kindness—involve lowering the car window at red lights—is almost always greeted with effusive gratitude.

Participants have reported three main benefits. First, it helps meet the challenge of aligning our convictions with our actions. Second, it avoids the possible discomfort of giving out money. Third, it is a meaningful learning opportunity for children in the car.

This little deed will not cure hunger, but it is an easy way to live Rabbi Tarfon’s words: “It is not your responsibility to finish the work, yet you are not free to avoid it” (*Pirkei Avot* 2:16).
As we continue to celebrate our 40th year, Kahal B’raira (Community of Choice) has been looking at our past, celebrating the present and envisioning our future.

At one time, we were a small group meeting in people’s living rooms. We were quite content to have our treasurer be someone who could write checks and propose budgets.

As our congregation evolved, the financial concerns of KB became more complicated. Our financial needs became more complex and time consuming. An extensive list of responsibilities includes: proposing more detailed budgets, collecting dues and tuitions, tracking memberships, running a payroll, collecting receipts, paying bills, bookkeeping, government reporting, and soliciting appeals. How long could a growing congregation realistically have expected that this could remain solely a volunteer’s position?

We realized having more people involved would require a sharing of responsibility as well as allowing a system of “checks and balances.” We set up a grid of the tasks that the Treasurer had taken on. We divided those up among a paid bookkeeper, the treasurer, congregational staff, and relevant committees (already existing and newly created). And so we enabled the knowledge, oversight, and work involved in congregational finances to become more equitably shared.

Making this difficult transition taps into congregational resources, both volunteer hours and monetarily. We are into our 2nd year after the transition. We continue to refine our systems so all the financial aspects of our congregation continue to run smoothly and efficiently. This is part of our growth as we look toward our future.

**KB Students Share Humanistic Blessings**

**CONGREGATION BETH ADAM’S ACTIVE OUTREACH**

At the Florida Humanist Association FreeFlo Conference in Orlando last November, Congregation Beth Adam hosted an exhibit table to promote Humanistic Judaism. We were thrilled with how many people stopped by to ask questions about us and pick up literature. We sent a list of names of people interested in Humanistic Judaism to SHJ with the hope of perhaps organizing a congregation in the Orlando area. Attending the conference provided us an opportunity to interact with other humanistic organizations and to expand our understanding of the current issues facing the humanistic movement. It was a great experience to be able to join other humanistic organizations in this conference.

CBA also is performing a social action project of collecting suitcases for the Jewish Agency for Foster Care Organization. Their residential children will use the suitcases to carry their belongings when they move to a new home.

Charlotte Weingarten and BJ Saul
To honor Carl Sagan as this year's SHJ Humanistic Jewish Role Model, the Secular Jewish Circle of Puget Sound presented a program about Sagan at our monthly Shabbat on February 26.

Sagan was influenced by a Jewish upbringing in Brooklyn which included his mother's keeping kosher, but as one of America's most prominent scientists and science popularizers, he often sounded themes that are at the heart of Secular Humanistic Judaism and Secular Judaism.

We discussed Sagan's views on the relationship between religion and science, his stance as a public intellectual of strong social policy concerns, and his advocacy of scientific skeptical inquiry. Although he never said "billions and billions," he is well known for popularizing the phrase "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence."

As part of the program, we viewed several short films narrated about Sagan which exemplify his humanistic views.
Beth Chaverim Celebrates

13 Years of Making a Difference

Thirteen years in the life of an individual is celebrated with a bar or a bat mitzvah. For a community, this is no less appropriate, and so on January 24, 2016, Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community of Deerfield celebrated its own communal life cycle event, b’nai mitzvah, (where “b’nai” is plural and used for mixed gender). Each of our students studying for a bar or bat mitzvah undertakes a community service project. So it was only fitting that the community’s b’nai mitzvah had one, too.

In the thirteen weeks leading up to the celebration, Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld sent an email to act as a countdown to the big day, and to inform members about the history of Beth Chaverim in particular, and the occasion generally. The topics included her own bat mitzvah experience when girls were not allowed to read from the Torah; community service projects undertaken; affiliations with national and local Jewish institutions including SHJ; and special programs and initiatives such as Judaism in Action, A Celebration of Jewish Art and Culture, and our distance learning program. In addition, members learned more about Humanistic Judaism, and about bar and bat mitzvah. The excitement built until the big day!

The celebration, held at Bernie’s Book Bank in Lake Bluff, included a service that marked the occasion, community service, and of course, food to enjoy. Guests, ranging in age from four to eighty-two, were invited to bring new or gently used children’s books, and an entire bin of books was collected. Rabbi Jodi led the service that included readings apropos to the day, and spoke of the importance of wisdom in the Jewish tradition generally, and in the creation of Beth Chaverim in particular. Following the service, we engaged in community service on-site helping to prepare books for distribution to children in impoverished neighborhoods in the Chicago area. As a partner for the morning, Beth Chaverim was an active participant in the mission of Bernie’s Book Bank, “to facilitate the collection, processing and redistribution of new and gently used children's books to significantly increase book ownership among at-risk infants, toddlers and school-age children throughout Chicagoland.”

Rabbi Jodi said of the morning, “We demonstrated the power of community achieving so much more together than any one of us could alone. We have made a difference in the lives of children. Beth Chaverim is a remarkable community of giving, generous people. Since our founding, we have made community service the center of our identity. By way of example, we have collectively provided meals to hundreds of people through a soup kitchen and local PADS shelter, collected toys for needy children at the holidays, provided pet supplies and toys to the local animal shelter, and donated carloads of food to the Deerfield Township Food Pantry. Our impact far exceeds our size. We come from a tradition that teaches ‘whoever saves a life, it is as if he has saved the world.’” Those in attendance all remarked on what a special morning it was. Rabbi Miriam Jerris was able to attend and offer a certificate of congratulations on behalf of the Society.
Slogans Contest

Humanistic Judaism? What’s That?

How are Secular Humanistic Jews different from all other Jews? How shall we describe Humanistic Judaism as unique? In seven words or less?

Start your brainstorming, everyone! SHJ is holding a slogans contest. In keeping with SHJ’s current efforts to self-evaluate, revitalize, and look to a future of growth and new vigor, the Society is asking all members to take on the job of explaining to the world who we are as Jews and in what way we are like no other Jews. Other organizations use a characteristic slogan to aid in this. According to what the Society has learned through the process, we need to do the same.

The Society invites all SHJ members to submit ideas for a slogan of seven words or less – and some say the shorter the better. A team of three members of SHJ with marketing expertise plus SHJ president, Larry Lawrence, and Rabbi Miriam Jerris, will review all slogan submissions and send a recommended shortlist for the SHJ Board to act on. More than one slogan may be selected to be used in different ways.

Goaltrac, the consultant firm helping the Society, defines slogans this way: “a slogan succinctly and effectively communicates the central message of the organization. Often, it is woven into the logo and/or displayed prominently on the home page of the website and in other communication materials.”

Here are samples of slogans created by other organizations, both within the Society and allied to our Humanistic movement:

- American Humanist Association: Good without a God
- American Ethical Union: Inspiring Ethical Communities
- Sunday Assembly: Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More
- Unitarian Universalist Association: We have a legacy of ‘deeds not creeds’
- Interfaith Family: Supporting Interfaith Families Exploring Jewish Life
- City Congregation of New York: New York’s Home for Secular and Cultural Jews
- Kol Shalom: Another Way to be Jewish
- Or Emet: A Home for Wondering Jews

In addition to this call for slogans from all members, a slogan brainstorming challenge is going to the HuJews, who will meet in their Conclave in March, and to the educators and students of our affiliate community Sunday schools. We like the idea of harnessing the creativity of our younger members to help us turn our organizational face to the future.

Get busy thinking, Let’s who Deb Godden

Let’s tell the we every-world are!

Please email your slogan ideas to SHJslogancaseest@gmail.com no later than April 15. Please include your name, location, and contact information.
Or Emet Announces:
Rabbi Adam Chalom to Lead Programs with Or Emet

From April 7 to 10, 2016, a long weekend, Rabbi Adam Chalom will be the special guest of Congregation Or Emet in the Twin Cities for multiple dynamic community-building and adult education events.

Rabbi Chalom is the Rabbi of Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation in north suburban Chicago, as well as the Dean for North America of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism (IISHJ). He has represented our movement with great insight and eloquence in local, regional and national media since well before his ordination by IISHJ in 2001.

This will be a special weekend for the local Humanistic Jewish community and beyond. Chalom’s keynote workshops in April, titled “Routes and Roots: The Evolution of Secular Humanistic Judaism,” will be held on Saturday and Sunday at Hamline University. Several Or Emet members will participate in the workshops as “leaders in training” as part of our long-term succession plans. Look for more details as the events get closer!

Additionally, Rabbi Chalom will lead the Shabbat service and program on Friday, April 8, 2016 at the Minneapolis Sabes JCC. That program is titled, “Integrity and Continuity: Humanistic Judaism and the Jewish Tradition.” As always, our Shabbat program is also free and open to the public.

On Thursday, April 7, Rabbi Chalom will also speak at the University of Minnesota. That program, “Holidays without the Holy: Secular Approaches to Celebrations,” is co-sponsored with Or Emet by the Student organization CASH (Campus Atheists, Skeptics, and Humanists).

Registration information can be found on Or Emet’s website http://oremet.org/.

Or Emet-Rabbi Chalom Weekend Seminar Sessions

Registrants may register for one, two, or all three sessions, as they wish. Seminar details (times, fees, and Saturday lunch options) will appear at the Or Emet website http://oremet.org/ in a few weeks.

Saturday morning, April 9: “Judaisms—Enlightenment, Emancipation & Modern Judaisms”

Pre-modern Judaism was radically transformed by Jewish experiences of emancipation and Enlightenment in the 19th century. How did Jewish identity change when one could be both Jewish and a free citizen? And what aspects of these choices and challenges still confront us today?

Saturday afternoon, April 9: “Jewishness: Socialism, Yiddishism, Zionism & Modern Culture”

If one is a free citizen, can one choose to no longer be Jewish? And if one wants to retain one’s Jewishness, must it be religious? Yiddishists, Zionists, Socialists and Cosmopolitans all grappled with these questions, and some of their answers continue to resonate and inspire.

Sunday morning, April 10: “Humanism, Secular and Ethnic Judaism, and the American Jewish Future”

Secular Humanistic Jews find inspiration from both their ethnic and cultural tradition and from the wider world of secular and Humanistic philosophy. What does it mean to be Jewish AND a Humanist? Jewish AND secular? And why be Jewish at all in the 21st Century?
Jews in Toronto have differing and multiple views on Israel. Come hear dialogue from leading speakers and thinkers on Israel as they answer questions about peace, security, and much more on Tuesday March 22, 7:30 p.m. Borochov Cultural Centre, Toronto, Canada.

This program is supported by a grant from the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

Moderated by Rabbi Denise Handlarski, Oraynu, participating organizations are:

- **The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs**, a national, non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of Jewish life in Canada by advancing the public policy interests of Canada’s organized Jewish community.

- **JSpaceCanada** is a Jewish, progressive, pro-Israel, pro-peace voice in Canada. We support Israel as a democratic homeland for the Jewish people with full recognition of the equality and civil rights of all its citizens. We strongly support a two-state solution and a lasting agreement that will bring peace to the region. Understanding them to be an obstacle to that peace, we oppose Israel’s Jewish settlements. We also oppose all initiatives that attempt to challenge Israel’s right to exist or impose boycotts, divestments, or sanctions on Israel.

- **The New Israel Fund (NIF) of Canada** helps Israel live up to its founders' vision of a state that ensures complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants. Our aim is to advance liberal democracy, including freedom of speech and minority rights, and to fight inequality, injustice, and extremism that diminish Israel.

**CIJA panelist, Steve McDonald**, Deputy Director, Communications and Public Affairs for CIJA. Steve McDonald serves as a spokesperson for the Jewish community in the national media, prepares written advocacy materials, and offers communications advice to Jewish Federations and campus groups. He also leads CIJA’s effort to build relationships with churches and Christian leaders across Canada. Prior to joining CIJA, he served in the office of a Member of Parliament, on various political campaigns, and as a consultant and federal lobbyist for a private sector firm.

**JSpaceCanada panelist, Karen Mock**, is a human rights consultant, well known as a dynamic lecturer, workshop coordinator and facilitator. She was Executive Director and CEO of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation from 2001 to 2005 and prior to that was National Director of the League for Human Rights of B’nai Brith Canada for twelve years, as well as executive director of the League’s Human Rights Education and Training Centre, after several years as a teacher educator.

**The New Israel Fund of Canada panelist, Joan Garson**, is the Chair of New Israel Fund of Canada. Ms Garson is the immediate past chair of ARZENU, the international organization of Reform and Progressive Zionists and in that capacity filled a number of national and international positions. She is also active in Toronto, Canada in a range of Jewish and Zionist roles including leadership roles in her synagogue, Holy Blossom Temple, and with the Reform Movement in Israel and internationally.
We introduce rabbinic student **Joysa Winter**, who has been studying with the IISJH after a move from Colorado to the East Coast and an abrupt life change: marriage at age 35 and two medically engineered births.

Joysa spent years wanting to continue her Jewish studies – pretty much from age 22 when she walked into the Kol Nidre services at her college Hillel, and cried the whole night because she realized she “had a Jewish soul.” Now, years later, she’s still not sure what that means, but she has been immersed in the Jewish world ever since.

Armed with a journalism degree, Joysa dreamed of becoming a foreign correspondent. She worked her way up in the daily newspaper world, from a small American Indian, tribal newspaper in northern Oklahoma to large-city dailies in Colorado. However, a few years ago, she became part of the 25 percent of journalists at daily newspapers across the US who were downsized. Her vocation now is freelancing as a secular Jewish lifecycle officiant and freelance writer.

With gratitude that the Jewish Day School in Philadelphia is ideologically open enough – even for a Jewishly quirky family like hers, Joysa says that some of the lessons and messages don’t entirely reflect the viewpoint of her family but are a part of the conversation at the nightly dinner table. She hopes that as the lone secular humanist family in the school, they can serve as examples of the breadth of Jewish diversity in our world.

Joysa dreams of creating a “virtual” b’nai mitzvah program for families who, due to finances, geography or the ideology of their local congregations, can’t acquire the kind of learning they want for their kids.

Meet **David Steiner**, a rabbinic student in the IISHJ. When he is not studying Jewish history and Talmud, he serves as a mediator in the various courts of Cook County, a real estate developer and a filmmaker. Currently, his big project is working with the students of the Barbara A. Sizemore Academy, an Afro-centric school in the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago. Englewood is the setting of Spike Lee’s movie *Chiraq*, and it is among the poorest and most dangerous neighborhoods in Chicago. David’s film, *Saving Barbara Sizemore*, is a co-production with students that is trying to keep the school from imminent closure by the Chicago Public School District.

Also an Israeli citizen, David moved to agricultural boarding school near Tel Aviv when he was 15. He served in the IDF and lived 12 years in Israel, including a fellowship at the prestigious Shalom Hartman Institute. David is a doctor of education and learned filmmaking and art at UCLA. He has three children; Itamar, 15, Sahar, 18 and Maya, 20, who is currently serving in the IDF.

David is a frequent contributor to eJewish Philanthropy. His most recent article examines the slavery stories of Jews and African Americans. He also writes for Mediate.com. While David is studying to be a secular humanistic rabbi, he admits that a Chicago Cubs World Series in his lifetime might make him reexamine his beliefs.

She wrote a book, *Jewish Values*, for Berhman House Publishers and also publishes family histories, in Wagon Wheel Life Stories. She has ideas for books and resources to make accessible to other Jewish secular humanists – and thereby to grow the movement.
New Rabbi, New Energy in the Movement

Rabbi Barry Cohen is a new member of the Association of Humanistic Rabbis (AHR) and of the SHJ board. A product of the Reform Movement and born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee, Barry participated in local and regional youth groups and attended the South’s Union for Reform Judaism camp. Upon graduation from the University of Michigan in 1992, he entered Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

During his final year, he met Jennifer Cohen (then Jennifer Marwil). In 1998, he received his rabbinic ordination from the Cincinnati campus of HUC-JIR.

Cohen began his career in Scottsdale, Arizona, as a congregational rabbi. In 1999, his professional life took an unexpected turn to Jewish journalism. For more than four years, he worked at the Jewish News of Greater Phoenix. In 2004, Cohen returned to the congregational world with a move to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

In 2004, Jennifer gave birth to fraternal twins. After eight years, Cohen and his family moved to the greater Chicago area where he served as associate rabbi of Temple Chai in Long Grove, from 2012-2015. Tragically, Jennifer passed away in the summer of 2015.

In the summer of 2015, Rabbi Barry Cohen founded Right Hand Rabbi to foster “chaveirut,” the Hebrew word for spiritual friendship, with those who are unaffiliated.

Upcoming Events

Knowing about events coming along in our own movement and in our organizational allies encourages us to broaden our view. We link with and can benefit by knowing many people both within Humanistic Judaism

April 3-5, 2016
Rabbi Frank Tamburello visits
Machar, The Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism
Contact: Jane Christenson, administrator@machar.org

April 8-10, 2016
IISHJ Seminar at Or Emet, Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, Minneapolis, MN. The Roots of Secular Humanistic Judaism. Contact: IISHJ, info@iishj.org

April 28-May 1, 2016
SHJ Board Meeting, Farmington Hills, MI. Contact: info@shj.org

May 26-29, 2016
American Humanist Association
75th Anniversary Conference. Hyatt Regency McCormick Place Hotel, Chicago, IL. Contact: info@americanhumanist.org

May 27-30, 2016
Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations (CSJO) Conference. Glendon College, 2275 Bayview Ave, Toronto, Ontario Canada. Contact: CSJO

June 4, 2016
Community that Matters:  
A Vision for SHJ as the Denomination for Secular Jews

Should we think of ourselves as in any way marginal?. We are not. With all modest realism intended, we are THE congregational movement for the growing numbers of secular Jews and supporters of Secular Humanistic Judaism – many of whom may not yet realize that this latter designation describes them or that there is, in fact, a congregational or even a virtual movement ready for them.

One of our core missions is to keep Jewish culture alive and vital. As we pursue this goal, we are in fact well in the mainstream of both Jewish culture and Western/American civilization. First, our work for Jewish identity, values, and traditions makes us very respectably Jewish, and indeed our practice of reasoned civil debate traces back to the Talmudic scholars. Our focus on reason, evidence-based judgment, democracy, and ethics, places us among the most direct heirs of the Enlightenment in all of civil society. Our secular precursor Baruch Spinoza, of course, shaped the Enlightenment and helped shape the secular democratic thought of Founder Thomas Jefferson. Our mainstream character makes our upside potential indeed tremendous.

We of course also have the core missions of tikkun olam and educating children in humanist thought and Jewish culture and traditions. We do these and other things well. Take pride.!

Other missions come with their challenges: Since our upside potential rests so much on attracting the young unaffiliated, we must fully embrace that knotty challenge. This means fully committing to the goal of keeping secular unaffiliated youth from being lost to Judaism altogether. Again, with modest realism intended, our focus on Jewish culture may make us better positioned than other denominations to do this. Therefore, we should urge our congregations to try various forms of outreach to youth/millennials and then to share their results.

To realize this, our congregational communities must continue to be truly well served by belonging to SHJ. This means the easiest possible access to the considerable resources of the SHJ office – both staff expertise and GroveSite materials -- and to other congregations’ best ideas for building congregations and doing good work. Facilitating communication and resource sharing among congregations will bolster the sense of national/international community.

Further, congregations can and must actually experience the value of belonging to SHJ, through access and resource sharing, but also by experiencing Rabbi Falick’s and Rabbi Chalom’s writings, Rabbi Jerris’ counsel, IISHJ programs, etc. These all will matter as we move forward.

Finally, we need to embody our charisma -- which we have! -- in a compelling, action-based slogan. My title hints at one, but I challenge readers to come up with a more dynamic one.

Richard D. Logan, SHJ Vice President
Building Community: Creating Confidence and Credibility

Being Jewish was always important to me. I went to Jewish summer camp and was active in a Jewish youth group. At some point in high school, I realized that I was compelled by Jewish culture and history, yet the liturgy was not relevant or vital to me. I was mouthing words that I did not believe, and the notion that Jews had been sharing these words for centuries was not compelling enough to me to continue speaking them. Finding Humanistic Judaism allowed me to remain authentically and actively Jewish.

I was in my early 20’s when I became involved in the Society for Humanistic Judaism. It was a natural fit. I was inspired and engaged. Humanistic Judaism allowed me to reach all my goals about who I wanted to be and how I wanted to live. It was an exciting time. As the word spread about Rabbi Wine, we started to get inquiries about having Humanistic Jewish congregations and groups in other geographic areas. To be able to share my passion for a secular humanistic, non-theistic, Jewish identity was so invigorating. I was excited by this idea then, and all these years later, I still am. Making this option available to others became my life’s work.

In those early days, the SHJ evolved. First, we were an organization of individual members. Then we became an organization of primarily affiliated communities. Its early success was in its ability to respond to the needs of those interested in the organization. For any organization to be vital, it needs to embrace a number of things. Successful organizations need to be good listeners, be open to change, and empower their membership.

The Board of Directors of the SHJ has heard those of you who answered the survey. We are still listening. In embarking on the Vision Project this year, we have made a commitment to change. We are empowering our membership by being transparent, open to questions, willing to consider new ideas.

With the departure of the Executive Director, the untimely death of the long-time editor of the journal, Humanistic Judaism, and the willingness of new people to be actively involved in the SHJ, we have the opportunity to re-envision our organization. Because we have not yet replaced the Executive Director, volunteers are stepping up and engaging in the important work of the Society. I am grateful for the many talented members who are volunteering their time and adding their voices to those who came before. The change is evident, the excitement palpable.

Recently, I was asked about my vision for the organization and my role in that vision. My dream is to help realize the vision of our members. I see my role as a mentor, the holder of the organizational memory, and the supporter of the future that is chosen by the SHJ Board of Directors, based on member and societal needs. I am happy to protect the flame and to pass it on.

Secular Humanistic Judaism cannot be all things to all people. However, we can work together to embrace the future, to ensure that a secular, humanistic, non-theistic option for Jewish identity is available to those of us who yearn for it, who are inspired by it, and who engage in it.

The Society for Humanistic Judaism is its members, both individuals and those belonging to affiliate communities. It is more than an office in Farmington Hills, Michigan. It is more than its staff. It is more than its founder. It is each one of us, in every community, and beyond. In embracing change, in supporting and empowering the vision of volunteers and staff, Humanistic Judaism will be available to you, your children, your grandchildren, and all those who seek this distinctive approach to Judaism.

GOT EMAIL?
Send your email address to info@shj.org and begin to receive the SHJ e-newsletters, “Kesher: Community Connections” and “On the Move,” with timely news about SHJ communities, the Society’s activities, and links of interest.
These Tributes, from August 2015 through February 2016, Support Humanistic Judaism and Remember Loved Ones. SHJ Tributes for every occasion Provide the programs we need

Thank You for Thinking of SHJ

To Barbara Schnuer
In memory of your husband, Sy
From The Society for Humanistic Judaism

To Heidi Feldman and Family
In memory of Ruth Feldman
From Stacy Lieberman, Jonathan Ritter & Family

To Rabbi Frank Tamburello
In memory of your mother
From Miriam Jerris & Stephen Stawicki

To Roger Addelson
Get well soon and feel better
From The Society for Humanistic Judaism

To Andrea Friedlander
In memory of your father
From The Society for Humanistic Judaism
Stefanie Blum
Faith & Steve Orenland
Miriam Jerris and Steve Stawicki

To Richard Logan
In memory of your father, Wesley L. Logan
From The Society for Humanistic Judaism
Miriam Jerris and Steve Stawicki
Andrea and Mark Friedlander

To Rabbi Jeff Jalick
In honor of the excellent educational videos
Posted by the Birmingham Temple
From Michael White

To Bonnie Rodin & Alan Freiman
In honor of your wedding
From Lou and Ellie Altman

To Jeanette Katzman
In memory of Barney Katzman
From Gary Vandepadde

To Andrea Friedlander
In memory of your father
From The Society for Humanistic Judaism
Stefanie Blum
Faith & Steve Orenland
Miriam Jerris and Steve Stawicki

To Richard Logan
In memory of your father, Wesley L. Logan
From The Society for Humanistic Judaism
Miriam Jerris and Steve Stawicki
Andrea and Mark Friedlander

To Rabbi Jeff Jalick
In honor of the excellent educational videos
Posted by the Birmingham Temple
From Michael White

To Rabbi Jodi and David Kornfeld
Mazel tov on the birth of your grandson,
Theodore Brady Kornfeld
From the Society for Humanistic Judaism
Miriam Jerris and Steve Stawicki

Honor the Passages of Life
A tribute lets friends know you care.

YES! I would like to send:
an SHJ Tribute for a donation of_______ (minimum $5 US) or
an SHJ Certificate for a donation of_______ (minimum $25 US)

Please allocate tribute to: ____________________________ Fund.

To: ____________________________________________________________________________
Address: _______________________________________________________________________
in memory / honor (circle one) of: ____________________________

Return to: SHJ, 28611 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48334

CONCLAVE 2016

Forty four teens and young adults, from 11 communities and including 3 from CSJO, met (with 9 chaperones) over the weekend of March 4 for a lively program of discussions, community service, and just plain fun and bonding. The theme: “Asking Big Questions.”

Conclave is leadership development at its best, a superb example of what generous support of SHJ members can achieve.