

High School Students Return to New Orleans to Help Rebuild

Three years after Hurricane Katrina hit the New Orleans region, Solomon Schechter Day School of Essex and Union continues to send a student delegation to help in the rebuilding efforts. Twenty SSDSEU High School students visited the region Dec. 2-5.

During the three-day span of the Third Annual Hurricane Katrina Relief Mission, students spent time working in classrooms of an underprivileged elementary school in Westwego, LA. Westwego took in three schools worth of students after the storm and are in need of materials and resources. Our students brought 20 boxes filled with school supplies that Schechter families and faculty had collected the school.

Students also toured the devastation in many parts of the greater New



Schechter Mission participants with actor Brad Pitt

Orleans area and worked with Habitat for Humanity. Their work yielded four houses that are now near completion. "The reality in New Orleans today is that it is not overflowing with volunteers," said SSDSEU Dean of Students Adam Shapiro, who organized and chaperoned the trip. "Had we not helped when we did these houses would have been further delayed and the prospect of these families

getting in before Christmas would have been pretty far-fetched idea."

Students spoke with Katrina survivor Robert Green, who lost his granddaughter and mother to the hurricane, about the trials and tribulations of life in NOLA post-Katrina and what it means to put the pieces of his life back together. He explained to the students that their work in New Orleans is incredible and much appreciated and that every little act of kindness goes a long way.

In addition to the personal rewards felt by the students knowing they are helping so many people, the participants were also very pleasantly surprised to have the chance to meet and speak with actor Brad Pitt, who is also active in rebuilding the area. During the unplanned meeting, Pitt spent a few minutes talking to the

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JEWISH DAY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN METROWEST – AHEAD OF THE CURVE



SSDSEU students demonstrate DNA decoding to attendees at the Eight Everyday Miracles in Jewish Day Schools program, Dec. 14 at the Alex Aidekman Family Jewish Community Campus in Whippany.

We reported this past spring that United Jewish Communities of MetroWest NJ, the state's largest Jewish federation, launched a \$50 million communitywide campaign that is being hailed as a groundbreaking collaborative effort in support of Jewish day school education.

We are proud that eleven local families committed \$13.5 million toward the MetroWest Day School Campaign. The campaign, which was officially launched on April 29, allows the three MetroWest day schools – Hebrew Academy of Morris County, Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy/Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School and SSDEU – to retain their own endowment funds while drawing on a community fund and a matching pool. The hope is to infuse all three schools with monetary and programming support, including, but not limited to, affordability grants for middle income families, enhancements to education and various collaborative projects.

Joint marketing initiatives have already begun and

include the creation of a MetroWest Jewish Day School Education brochure. A website is also in the works and there are plans for the creation of additional joint marketing materials.

Science Initiatives

Last spring, Dr. Nitzan Resnick, consultant and Director of the Science Department at South Area Solomon Schechter Day School in Norwood, MA, visited Kushner, HAMC and SSDSEU. Dr. Resnick evaluated each school's curricula and practices and made recommendations, including the feasibility of sharing more expensive science equipment.

SSDSEU specific recommendations included continued evaluation of the science program and having students participate in "real" research with scientists. Schechter Science Department has been undertaking a rigorous re-examination of curriculum and practice. Dr. Resnick also recommended continuing professional development for the faculty with an emphasis on

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From the Head of School



Our strategic planning process is off to a great start. Rooted in this endeavor is our belief that a mature institution chooses to examine itself and plan for the future in a thoughtful way. We are still “in business” after almost 45 years because we take the time to engage in big picture discussions and ongoing reflection. To date, our Strategic Planning Committee conducted several meetings in addition to the “mini-retreats” held by our Board of Trustees and administrative team in which issues of mission and identity were explored.

To me, one of the most impressive aspects of our school’s strategic plan is openness of the committee and the willingness of all involved to date – Strategic Planning Committee, lay leadership and administrative team – to open ourselves up to all questions of mission and identity and from that, to plan for our school’s future.

While at this early juncture there are no results to report to you, I can tell you the kinds of questions and issues about which I personally have been thinking. These include:

- How do we best educate children today to be leaders of tomorrow’s Jewish community? What does that education look like?
- How do we broaden our education to include multiple intelligences, latest trends, best practices, etc. in order to prepare our students for personal and professional life in the 21st century?
- How do we best serve not only our students, but their families as well, especially in a society in which the school is often the primary presence of Jewish identification?
- What is the interplay between affordability and academic excellence?
- How big is our tent? How open are we to a multiplicity of learning styles and Jewish observance? How open do we want to be and does that inclusivity correlate with financial stability?

I am excited to report to you that our strategic planning process will be facilitated by Bill Weary of Fieldstone Consulting Company. Mr. Weary, who spent two weeks interviewing representatives of all of Schechter’s constituent groups for his institutional assessment, knows our school well. His assessment report was “right on the money” and we now look forward to his expertise as he joins Maria Erlitz, our PEJE (Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education) coach, to lead our school in this critical endeavor.

It is too early for answers; we are just beginning to ask the questions. While we will again be opening our process to all of our community stakeholders, I welcome any thoughts you have on the above questions. The more vibrant our community dialogue, the more robust our final strategic plan. I encourage any comments to the questions on my mind. Feel free to e-mail me at jraynor@ssdseu.org.

I am proud to be part of a school that is so committed to ongoing reflection and self-study. I am encouraged by the excitement and dedication of those involved to date. Their good work will only increase as we move forward and open the process to others. May we continue to grow as a community and move forward together *michayil l’chayil* – from strength to strength.

Joyce Raynor, Ph.D.
Head of School

Chair Message



As our school embarks upon its 44th year, there is much to be thankful for, and much to look forward to. Over the past several months, through the generosity and tireless efforts of many, we have accomplished a great deal. The renovation of the Eric F. Ross Upper School Campus was completed in time for the new school year. Through the extraordinary generosity of Eric and Lore Ross, along with that of many other families and friends, we now have a state of the art Upper School with the latest modern technology, new science labs, and expanded and renovated facilities with enhanced professional and administrative offices, all of which have greatly improved the learning environment for our students. Through the support of the Community Day School Endowment, Paula and Jerry Gottesman, Jane and Daniel Och and their challenge to our community, our endowment has grown to provide for a meaningful subvention program to support affordability at our school.

After enormous effort, and despite opposition from many local residents, we have at long-last obtained township approvals to renovate the Upper School athletic fields. We are now commencing the process to obtain estimates and bids to conduct that work, and we are hopeful that we will be able to embark upon those renovations in the near future so that our children will soon be enjoying upgraded and regulation varsity soccer and softball fields, as well as a running track. Our entire student body will benefit from these upgraded facilities in many ways and for years to come.

We are also very proud to note the outstanding leadership of our Head of School, Dr. Joyce Raynor. Under Dr. Raynor’s guidance, we have received our New Jersey Association of Independent Schools (NJ AIS) reaccreditation, reaffirming Schechter’s place among the most prestigious independent schools in the state. Our students continue to gain acceptance into the finest colleges and universities in the country. As laudable as those successes are, perhaps our school’s greatest achievement is the impact a Schechter education has upon our children. Our students reflect the finest values of a Jewish education, are consistently involved in wide-ranging community and public service activities, and go on to become leaders of Jewish life on the college campuses that they attend. As the director for admissions at Princeton University noted at our recent college night, Schechter students’ values are shaped far more by their education at Schechter than during the four years they will spend at college. To paraphrase her comments, she went on to note that a Schechter education is incredibly special, and molds our students to be socially responsible, civic-minded, and reflects the highest ideals of a Jewish value-based education. High praise indeed!

At the same time that we recognize our successes, we are also mindful of the many challenges we face, particularly during a difficult economic environment. Many in our community find themselves less fortunate than last year, and face uncertainty in the year ahead. We have received a number of requests for emergency tuition assistance. During these times of difficulty, the great strength of our community has always been that we can count on each other to come together in support of those less fortunate. The Board of Trustees is committed to assisting as many students in need as possible, and those needs are great. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I ask that each of you contribute to our Shomrei Torah Annual Campaign so that we can continue this most important work of providing an outstanding Jewish and secular education to each and every one of our students who requires tuition assistance during a time of need.

Hazak hazak v’nithazek
Eleanor Kramer
Chair, Board of Trustees

Solomon Schechter Responds to the Economic Crisis

As a school and as a community, SSDSEU is very concerned about the effect of the recent economic downturn on our families' ability to afford a Schechter education. While many of our families are fortunate to have not been affected, we know that there are others who have been significantly impacted.

Additional tuition assistance funds have been allocated from the school's operating budget for emergency situations, such as unexpected job loss. Private fundraising efforts are

successfully underway to supplement our tuition assistance program. Current SSDSEU parents should contact the Business Office (973-602-3775) or visit our website for more information.

Additional tuition assistance funds have been allocated by the Day School Council of MetroWest. The following community resources are also available: The Hebrew Free Loan program through Jewish Family Service (973-765-9050, ext. 344), while not available for tuition, is available to assist families with other

living expenses during times of financial difficulty (www.jfs-metronj.org). Also, the Jewish Federation of MetroWest has a referral number for community based resources (973-765-9050).

For questions about any of these programs or to apply for emergency tuition assistance for this school year, please contact Julia Malaga, Chief Financial Officer, at 973-602-3793 or by e-mail at jmalaga@ssdseu.org. All inquiries will remain confidential.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Lilach Bluevise Receives Hoffman Award



Congratulations to Ms. Lilach Bluevise, SSDSEU Director of Israel Programming and Upper School Hebrew Department chair, who is the winner of the 2008 Adele and Gene Hoffman Award for Educator Excellence.

As a winner, Ms. Bluevise is among 65 of the finest Jewish educators from across North America who was honored at the ninth annual Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education. The ceremony was held in New York, Oct. 27-29, in conjunction with a national gathering of leaders in the field of Jewish education.

Ms. Bluevise received a cash prize, which will be matched by a stipend for professional development from the Grinspoon Foundation and the Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life. In addition to the national ceremony in New York, Ms. Bluevise will be honored at The Learning Conference, sponsored by The Partnership for Jewish Learning and Life for all Jewish educators in February at the Alex Aidekman Family Jewish Community Campus in Whippany.

Ms. Bluevise joined SSDSEU in May 2002 as a substitute teacher. She later became Director of Israel Programming and Hebrew Department Chair. Ms. Bluevise says she feels "privileged to work in a school that puts so much emphasis on Israel education and Hebrew education. I am lucky to be doing what I love and working with faculty members and students that have a real love and interest in Israel."

Rabbi Kavon Attends Cathedral Rededication

Upper School Judaics teacher Rabbi Herbert Kavon and SSDSEU graduate Adi Siegel (class of 2007) recently attended the rededication of the Cathedral Ceremony at The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in New York City.

The church was devastated by a fire in December of 2001. Approximately 3,000 people attended the event, including former New York Senator and incoming United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Rabbi Kavon takes his 11th grade honors Tanach class to visit the church each year.

Coppelson Writes First Women Torah Scroll

Upper School teacher Linda Coppelson has become one of fewer than a dozen *sofrot*, or female scribes of sacred texts, in the world. Ms. Coppelson is one of three *sofrot* working on the first Torah scroll commissioned



Photo by Johanna Ginsberg, *New Jersey Jewish News*

exclusively for women scribes by a Reconstructionist community in Seattle. Her assignment – the book of Bamidbar, Numbers.

Although the Torah scroll was commissioned in 2003, Ms. Coppelson began working on the project on Nov. 30, 2008. As a Hebrew calligrapher, she has written and illustrated *ketubot*, or wedding contracts, *megillot* and commemorative fund-raising scrolls for a number of years. A few years ago she decided to combine her two passions. She contacted Dr. Eric Ray, a scribe, to ask to become an apprentice. Ray, who died in 2005, was both a *sofer* and an art historian.

To become a *sofer*, a person not only needs skill in calligraphy but also in *Halacha*, Jewish law and text. The apprenticeship includes technical training (how to repair a scroll, how to cut a quill) and text study. After finishing her work with Ray, Ms. Coppelson continued to study texts intensively in a *hevruta*, or paired study.

Ms. Coppelson contacted the Seattle congregation and expressed her interest in the project. She was hired and is now averaging 15 lines per day. Her goal is to finish Bamidbar in six months.

Bielski Family Featured in *Defiance*

The movie *Defiance*, opening in theaters nationwide on Jan. 16, 2009, is based on the true story of the Bielski family and their story of survival during the Holocaust. Jessica Bielski, granddaughter of Zus Bielski (played by Liev Schreiber in the movie), is a 10th grade student at the Upper School. Jessica has an older sister, Rachel.

Jessica's mother, Roz Moskowitz-Bielski, said, "It's definitely the biggest budget Holocaust story since *Schindler's List*. We've seen it twice and it's really well done. Edward Zwick is a great director."

According to the movie's website, www.defiancemoovie.com, "*Defiance* is an epic tale of family, honor, vengeance and salvation in World

War II. The year is 1941 and the Jews of Eastern Europe are being massacred by the thousands. Managing to escape certain death, three brothers take refuge in the dense surrounding woods they have known since childhood. There they begin their desperate battle against the Nazis. Daniel Craig, Liev Schreiber and Jamie Bell star as brothers who turn a primitive struggle to survive into something far more consequential – a way to avenge the deaths of their loved ones by saving thousands of others."



Neal Monka at the premier of *Defiance*.



Jessica Bielski. The photo by Debbie L. Hochberg, which appeared in the Dec. 18 edition of the West Orange Chronicle is reproduced with permission of the publisher, Worrall Community Newspapers.

Making the story even more interesting is the fact that SSDSEU 10th grader Neal Monka is the grandson of two Holocaust survivors who were saved through the Bielski partisans.

Neal Monka and Jessica Bielski discovered the longtime family connection several years ago and shared it with their teachers and classmates last year during *Naale*, the SSDSEU 9th grade trip to Israel, when they saw exhibits about the Bielski brothers at Yad Vashem.

Neal's maternal grandfather, the late Chanan Levkovitz, was a teenager during the war and was a member of the fighter group of Bielski's partisans who went out and brought food back for the others in hiding. Neal's paternal grandmother, Ann Monka, who was 10 years

old during the war, was among the other group saved by the Bielski brothers.

After the war, Ann Monka and the rest of her surviving family members moved to America. Chanan Levkovitz was the only survivor from his family and moved to Israel. The families stayed in touch with each other, and also with the Bielskis, through the years. Neal's parents, Dr. Ira and Esti Monka, grew up calling each other cousins since their families were so close. Neal has two older brothers, Lonnie and Alle-say.

9th Graders are *Shlichei Mitzvah* on *Naale*



Our 9th graders participated in the annual *Naale*, a 10-day trip to Israel in September. The trip offers many group activities aimed at getting to know Israel better, exploring students' relationship to the country, and experiencing Judaism in an inspiring Jewish atmosphere. It also allows students to get to know their friends in the grade in a non-academic setting. The trip also focuses on *tikkun olam* and volunteer work. Before leaving on their trip, the students collected money and were proud to be *shlichei* (emissaries) *mitzvah*. They also raised additional money to donate by auctioning off lost and found items on their bus! The students decided to donate the money to Aleh Negev, a special needs facility located next to Merchavim High School and purchased a special motorized scooter for the residents.

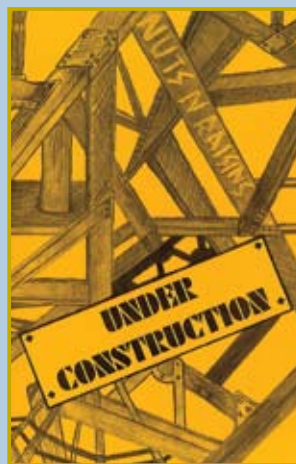
While in Israel, students presented the head of school of Merchavim High School with an olive tree as a gift and symbol of the lasting bond between the schools. They also donated Schechter sports uniforms which will be used by their volleyball team in the fall.

A special thank you to the following families who made generous donations toward our 9th grade Israel Experience Scholarship Program: Susie and Howard Bruch, Ilana and Lance Kaplan, Gloria and Gene Landy, Sheryl and Sam Pearlstein, and also to Bennet and Judy Schonfeld who matched the amount the kids raised at the Family Fun Day carwash. Thanks also to the Israel club students and the 9th grade students who worked so hard to raise funds with through their challah sale, carwash and used ink cartridge program. Thanks again to Susie Bruch and Sharon Rockman for chairing the Israel Experience Raffle and to Zev and Rachel Scherl who donated their prize.

First Place for *Nuts and Raisins*

The 2008 edition of *Nuts and Raisins*, the Upper School student literary magazine, has won First Place with Special Merit from the American Scholastic Press Association. The publication garnered 965 points out of a possible 1000. *Nuts and Raisins* also won First Place with Special Merit in 2005 and 2006 and First Place in 2007.

According to teacher Diane Biegelson, "Our editors and staff work tirelessly and with such enthusiasm and dedication each and every week of the year. During our publishing period in the late spring they work even longer hours - many more hours! It is a true privilege for me to be their faculty advisor."



College Acceptances

We are happy to report that thus far this year, the following colleges and universities have accepted our students:

Boston University	Northeastern University	University of Indiana
Case Western University	Penn State	University of Massachusetts at Amherst
Columbia College in Chicago	Rutgers University	University of Miami
Columbia University	Smith College	University of Michigan
George Washington University	Tufts University	University of Pennsylvania
Muhlenberg College	Tulane University	University of Pittsburgh
New York University	University of Chicago	University of Vermont
	University of Hartford	

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Schechter contingent and even took the time to get into a group picture with them.

According to Shapiro, “It was great not only to see him, but also to see the fruit of his labor in the houses that he is building in

the Lower 9th (ward of New Orleans) that are completely energy efficient and independent of the power grid.”

While the students were excited by their celebrity encounter, SSDSEU senior LeeAnn Langer of Highland Park said “Mr. Green told us that we were the real stars by coming down to help even after three years. He said that even small things that seem insignificant really help the rebuilding process. He was extremely optimistic, and said that they are soon going to start building his house, which should take about 45 days to build. He told us that patience is very important.”

Mission participants also spent time at Shir Chadash, the Conservative synagogue in Metairie, LA. They had the opportunity to hear from Ned Goldberg, director of the Jewish Children’s Regional Service,



and presented him with a donation of more than \$1,300 that had been collected by SSDSEU before the trip. The money will go towards the purchase of Hanukkah gifts for children in need in the Gulf region.

While still in New Orleans, Shapiro said, “Our wonderful and dedicated students are living the concept of *tikkun olam* this week and it is an incredible thing to be a part of.” SSDSEU senior Britty Cohen of Edison added, “I think it is so important for people to continue to volunteer because if not us, then who will? It’s amazing — everywhere we went in New Orleans, whether it was a synagogue for dinner, a Habitat site, or talking with civilians, we were always welcome. After all that these people have been through, their positivity is something everyone should take away from New Orleans.”

Senior Aliza Tammam said, “In just three days I have changed! I have changed into a person who realizes that not only can she dream of making a difference, but can actually put that dream into action.”

SSDSEU Walks for Life



Students at the Lower and Upper School campuses “walked for life” on Wednesday, Nov. 26th and raised \$2,500 for the The Gift of Life Foundation, an organization committed to the recruitment of bone marrow donors of Eastern-European Jewish ancestry. Our students have taken part in this important mitzvah of *pikuach nefesh* – the saving of a life – for the past 14 years.

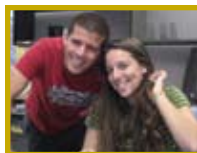
Just before Thanksgiving each year, our students and faculty obtain sponsors and walk for approximately one mile. Walk for Life is spearheaded and sponsored by L’Mad, our school’s local chapter of the National Honor Society. Each year the school raises several thousand dollars for the organization.



Rishonim Bring Israel to SSDSEU

We are very excited to be participating, once again, in the Rishonim Program of the Legow Family Israel Program Center of United Jewish Communities of MetroWest NJ, where young emissaries defer their IDF service for one year and come from Israel to volunteer in our community. They are experts in informal Jewish education and share their enthusiasm and love for Israel and Israeli culture with our students.

Nadav Kalderon is 18 years old and comes from the MetroWest partnership community of Rishon LeZion. He has participated in the Tzofim since sixth grade, and progressed to being a leader of a group of thirty 5th grade children. Nadav also has



participated in a youth exchange program which allowed him to travel to Germany. Nadav is working with students in grades 4 and 5 in the Lower School, facilitating activities that bring Israel to the younger students.

Maya Szabo is 18 years old and comes from the MetroWest partnership community of Ra’anana. She has also been very active in the Tzofim and believes that her year of service in MetroWest is very important because she wants to create meaningful interactions between Israelis and Americans. Maya is working with students in grades 6-9 and with the Israel club students and Ma Hamatzav discussion minyan.

Lower School



Hot of the Press

Our Lower School students recently published the first issue of *The Spark*, the school's new student newspaper. Under the guidance of Rebecca Kurson, more than 50 fourth and fifth grade students worked on articles and interviewed students in the younger grades. Students met during lunch and recess to work on the paper. The publication features several articles about school life (the 5th grade and Gan buddy program, interviews with first graders, school sports); poetry, comics and puzzles. The first edition also featured a special election report with exit polls taken when the students voted for the next US president.

To read a copy of *The Spark*, visit our website, www.ssdseu.org (Schechter Life, Lower School).

Schechter Votes



Our pre-K through 5th grade students casted their votes for president on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 4th. Fifth grade Va'ad (student council) members ran the Schechter polling center. After signing each "voter" in, Va'ad members

guided each student to a voting machine, or SMART Board, where they each cast their vote. Students had to answer a number of questions, including who they want the next president of the United States to be. Student reporters from *The Spark*, the new Lower School student newspaper, conducted exit interviews.

The results were tallied using an e-survey program. With 308 student votes, our Schechter election went the way of the country – Barak Obama received 70% of the votes while John McCain received 24.6%. 5.4% were undecided.



Shema PJ Party

On Thursday, Nov. 20, our Gan students and their parents had an opportunity to explore the ritual of the bedtime *Shema*. This short and comforting

piece of liturgy provides a way to reflect on the day's events, to process, relax and help with what can be a difficult transition to bedtime and sleep for young children. Through art projects and stories our students experienced the power of *tefila* in a different way bringing them closer to their parents and their tradition.

5th Grade Colonial Fair

Our 5th graders presented their Colonial Fair recently to 3rd and 4th graders. "Authentic" handmade candles, tin lanterns, hornbooks and braided coasters represented the Colonial Era.



Giving Back to the Community



Just before Thanksgiving, our fourth graders visited the Community Food Bank of New Jersey to learn how members of the NJ corporate community are working with food

banks and food pantries across the state to help them provide assistance to needy residents. Stop and Shop Supermarkets donated 1,000 turkeys to the Food Bank. Representatives were on hand to discuss with our students the efforts being made to help charitable organizations meet the needs of the hungry. They stressed the importance of all New Jersey companies and residents to do all they can during these very difficult economic times. The local media, including ABC and NBC News covered the event.

Lower School All-School Trip



There is nothing like a school trip to integrate formal academic programs with hands-on learning. These experiences extend and enrich our curriculum, giving life to the facts and figures we sometimes see only on paper. On Wednesday, November 5, the entire Lower School had a chance to see dinosaur bones along with exhibits like African Mammals, Planet Earth, Ocean Life, Meteorites, Minerals, Gems, and many more at the Museum of Natural History.

5th Graders Harvest at the Meadowlands

On Monday, October 6, our 5th graders traveled to the Meadowlands Conservation Center as their grade level *Tikkun Olam* trip. They learned about the importance of harvesting and clearing the area of Phragmites and discussed how to recycle/use the plants for Sukkot. The students collected Phragmites to use as *schach* for the school Sukkah. Since Phragmites are not a compatible and useful plant for the NJ Wetlands our students helped the surrounding plant and wild life by removing them. In return, they obtained a roof for their Sukkah!

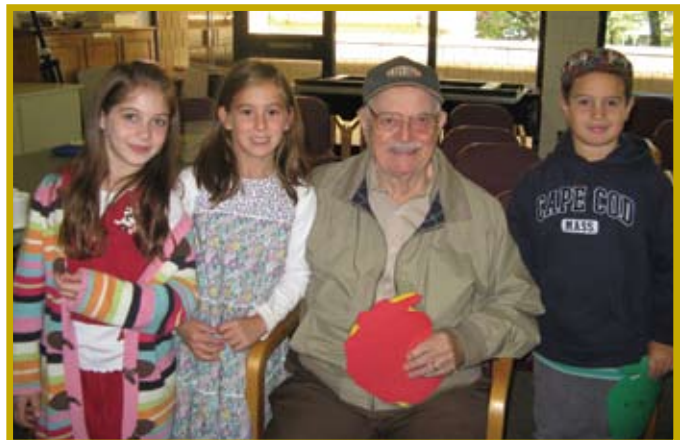


Va'ad Brings Hanukka to Valley Settlement

Our 5th Grade Va'ad recently visited the Valley Settlement House in West Orange for Hanukkah. Students told the story of Hanukkah, played dreidel, lit a Hanukkia, sang Hanukka songs and made a snowflake art project with 2 to 3 year olds. Our Va'ad collected board games and small toys this year for the nursery school. Valley Settlement House is a non-profit social service agency.



2nd Graders Bring Holidays to Seniors



During the High Holy Days our second graders visited senior citizens at the JCC in West Orange. They sang songs for the fall *hagim* – Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Simchat Torah. Each class also prepared an acrostic poem based on each of the holidays and made cards in Hebrew for Rosh Hashana for each senior. They ended their visit sharing apples and honey together. It was a sweet start to the New Year!

Upper School

Abraham's Vision Brings Jewish, Muslim Students Together



As part of a new course in our Upper School seniors are learning about Muslims, Jews, Islam and Judaism while strengthening the relationships to their own communities and religious traditions. Through the Abraham's Vision's Unity Program seniors at SSDSEU and the Al-Iman school in Queens learn individually and together about each other's cultures. The students came together six times during the first half of the school year for field trips and inter-group discussions and programs. According to Adam Shapiro, SSDSEU Dean of Students, "This is a chance for our students to experience the world around them in a safe environment where teaching tolerance is the main goal."

Molecular Biology Club



Senior Josh Heller and 10th grader Ira Herniter, along with biology teacher Gabrielle Sonet, participated in the Waksman Institute's Student Scholar Program at Rutgers this summer. During the four weeks, participants learned several essential techniques used in molecular biology research today while engaging in genuine research. This fall, back at school, Josh and Ira taught the skills they learned to other students who want to join the research project and members of the molecular biology club.

Teen Tzedakah Program

Yasher Koach to Upper School students Jolie Bruch (grade 11), Naomi Kramer (grade 11), Amanda Nessel (grade 10), and Jonathan Rabner (grade 11), who were selected to this year's UJC Iris Teen Tzedakah Program. This is Jonathan's second year in the program.

Each month, members of the program – which include more than 30 teenagers from a dozen high schools across the MetroWest community – take time from their frantic schedules of sports, homework and after-school clubs to get together to discuss charitable giving. Teens raise funds and each student donates \$200 of their own money toward a joint fund, which is then matched, dollar for dollar, by the Herb Iris Youth and Family Philanthropy Endowment of the Jewish Community Foundation of MetroWest. They oversee a grant-making process and decide how to allocate the money they raised.

Schechter Students Shine at USY Program



Recently, Congregation B'nai Israel in Millburn hosted the USY Leadership Training Institute for chapter and regional officers in the HaGalil Region. As we reported last Spring, SSDSEU has overwhelming representation on the 6-member executive board, which includes seniors Raffi Mark, Seffi Kogen, Josh Cooper, Jon Hecht and junior Jonathan Steinberg, along with former SSDSEU student Sherman Fabes. We are proud to acknowledge these young leaders' commitment to Jewish learning, *tefilla* and Jewish community. Attendees at the program weekend reported that our students not only exhibited their strengths on the executive board, but that there was substantial representation from each SSDSEU High School class, indicating that our students are USY leaders in their home congregations. *Yasher Koach* to our student leaders!

Sixth Graders Enjoy Teva



In November, sixth graders participated our annual Teva trip – a four-day camping excursion which allows students to learn about ecological matters in a Jewish values context.

In addition to being a great learning opportunity, the trip also is a wonderful bonding experience for sixth graders. Staff members Leslie Tubul, Jamie Himmelstein, Jason Bell, and Teresa Patel accompanied the students on their adventure. Students report that what they enjoyed most were the food at breakfast, hiking, getting to know each other better, the campfire, the classic Teva outdoor predator/prey game, eating on the trail and melting their cheese in a fire they made themselves, the night hike, learning that they like sunflower seed butter (a nut free peanut butter substitute), meeting students from four other schools who were there at the same time, and making rope chains out of recycled plastic remnants. Students learned why certain *brachot* are included in *birkat hamazon* and also continued to understand the mitzvah *bal tashchit* (do not destroy) as they learn how to become "*shomrei adamah*" (keepers of the earth).

Students and staff were delighted to find out that Schechter graduate Jeffrey Yoskowitz (Class of 1993) works in Teva's Adamah program. Adamah is a program run by the Teva Center with the goal of teaching about Jewish organic farming.

Neshama Yetera at SSDSEU



Our school recently participated in *Neshama Yetera*, an extended visit of Israeli high school students to our school.

The Israeli students spent five days out of their 11-day visit to the US with our school and students. While at the Upper School, participants attended classes and special programs. Programs included a discussion of how the results of the US presidential election will affect Israel, an art project with SSDSEU art teacher Sandra Charlap, a panel discussion on “Judaism For Me Is...,” a program on Judaism in SSDSEU through music, and a discussion of American teens: college; driving; sports. The Israeli visitors also spent time at the Lower School where they helped students create albums, taught Israeli slang, and created cell phone charms and key chains.

Besides spending time at SSDSEU, participants also visited local synagogues and nursery schools, toured New York City and Washington DC, and enjoyed shopping time and a New Jersey Nets basketball game.

Anything But Ordinary

“Celebrate the ordinary,” advised British poet Simon Armitage to the room filled with young writers at the 12th Biennial Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival. In September, 15 Schechter High School students traveled to Waterloo Village and joined thousands of their peers from the tri-state area and certainly celebrated — but the event was anything but ordinary! In the gazebo, volunteers were giving voice to the poems of Anne Sexton, Sappho and Walt Whitman. In the gristmill, Dovie Thomason was telling stories rich in the poetic tradition. In the Stagecoach Inn, Sarah Gambito, Roger Sedarat, and Aracelis Girmay were discussing their craft — and in every corner, students gathered to read their own poetry to impromptu and adoring teen audiences. As one of our students remarked, “It was like a rock concert — but for poets.”



8th Grade Bryn Mawr Trip

For the 7th consecutive year, the 8th grade had the wonderful opportunity to begin the school year with a class trip to Lake Bryn Mawr Camp in Honesdale, PA, Sept. 15-16. The trip is designed for relationship building and to strengthen class



cohesion. The students participated in group activities led by skilled leaders who focused on communication, interpersonal skills and cooperation. The highlight for the students is always spending time on the high and low ropes course and becoming reacquainted with their classmates after the summer break.

SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

The fall athletic season was very successful. The combined win/lose record of the Middle School teams was an even 14-14, while the High School teams posted a combined 473-1-1 record, almost a .600 record.

Ilana Herzberg was voted to the Prep B all state first team in soccer by the coaches. Ilana Herzberg also became the leading scorer in Schechter history for girls soccer, with 58 goals, while **Arielle Herzberg** became the second leading scorer with 39 goals. Senior cross country runner, **Ben Rosenbach** won every dual meet he ran and placed 11th at the NJISAA Invitational Meet at Blair Academy with a time of 18:20 on a very hilly course. Ben also was named to the Newark *Star Ledger* Cross Country, All Prep 3rd team!

The girls tennis team finished the season with a 10-3 record and was ranked 10th in the Prep Division of the *Star Ledger*

rankings at the conclusion of the season. The girls volleyball team won the first round of the Prep B tournament, only to lose in the semi final game against a very strong Lawrenceville team. Girls volleyball concluded the season ranked 3rd in the Prep Division by the *Star Ledger*.

At season's end, the boys varsity cross country team was ranked 10th among Prep Schools in the *Star Ledger*. Girls soccer concluded the season ranked 8th in the Prep Division by the *Star Ledger*, while Boys soccer concluded the season ranked 10th in the Prep Division by the *Star Ledger*.

Mazel tov to the following athletes who were named to all state Prep teams by the *Star Ledger*: Volleyball: First team - **Aly Robinson** and **Devon Skydell**; Second team - **Aliza Tammam** and **Gila Akselrad**; third team - **Danit Mark** and **Emily Cohen**. Soccer: Third team - **Ilana Herzberg** and **Arielle Herzberg**.

Operation Soccer Ball



Our Upper School students recently participated in Operation Soccer Ball 2008. This program sends donated inflated or deflated soccer balls to US troops in Iraq, who in turn distribute them to Iraqi children. Schechter students contributed approximately 50 soccer balls to the cause.

The S. Hirsch Jacobson Fellowship:

This past summer, Solomon Schechter Day School of Essex and Union proudly awarded the 10th annual S. Hirsch Jacobson Fellowship.

The award, given to at least one graduating senior each year, was established by the Jacobson family following the 1997 death of former SSDSEU Principal Hirsch Jacobson. The individuals chosen to receive the award “exemplify the values and attitudes that were core commitments of Hirsch Jacobson.” The recipients must demonstrate a high level of motivation and accomplishment in Judaic Studies, be knowledgeable in synagogue skills, and possess the personal characteristics of *derech eretz* and *menschlichkeit*. The monetary award is given to a deserving student who plans to become very involved in Jewish campus life upon graduation from SSDSEU.

Hirsch Jacobson was born on Sept. 10, 1938 and passed away on Sept. 11, 1997. In his short life he influenced several generations of students, parents, and faculty to live more “Jewishly.” During his tenure at Schechter, which began in 1976 as principal for Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade (at the time there was no head of school position), the school grew from

175 students to 840 and developed into one of the leading Solomon Schechter schools in the country.

Hirsch Jacobson’s health began to fail in 1991 and as a result, it became necessary for him to relinquish his role as an administrator. Through his remaining years, however, he maintained an active role in the school as a mentor, planner, and master teacher of Jewish philosophy, computers, and Talmud. According to his family, Mr. Jacobson perceived his relationship with the Schechter family as one of mutual growth which allowed him to implement his vision of a vibrant, flourishing Conservative day school. The addition of the Upper School building in 1991 was a fulfillment of Hirsch’s dream.

Hirsch’s wife, Marion, said “he was the *neshama*, the Jewish spiritual soul, of the school. His relationships with the students and teachers were very important and each one was special to him.” As she looks around her home, there are still reminders of those relationships including “gifts from students that were given to Hirsch, photos on the wall, a *megilla* cover. The gifts represent what Hirsch stood for.” Marion said the fellowship was created to recognize students who represent what Hirsch saw as important.

“It doesn’t have to be someone who is religious, just someone who feels in their hearts what we as Jewish people care about.” She also pointed out that the winners all come from different backgrounds and vantage points, but what they all share is the deep connection to Judaism and the Jewish spirit.

In the 10 years since its creation, 18 graduating seniors have been named S. Hirsch Jacobson Fellows. All of the graduates have gone on to achieve many wonderful things, personally, academically, and professionally. According to Jacobson’s daughter, Atara (SSDSEU class of 1987 and current parent), her father “measured his efforts by the students who could chant Torah and Haftorah; by the number of graduates who chose careers in the fields of Jewish learning, academia, and clergy; by the number of students who asked their families to become kosher or keep Shabbat or to plan trips to Israel; by the students who shared stories of seeking the Hillel offices when touring various colleges across the country.” In addition to Atara, Hirsch Jacobson’s other daughters all graduated from Schechter as well – Adina (class of 1990), Roni (class of 1989) and Shira (class of 1985).

Jacobson Fellowship Recipients – Where Are They Now?

We reached out to all of our past Jacobson Fellowship recipients. Below are highlights of their accomplishments thus far.

Uri Allen, class of 1998

After graduating from SSDSEU, Uri participated in the Nativ program in Israel. From there he went to the University of Maryland College Park, where he earned a BA in Jewish studies with a minor in religious studies. After college, Uri went back to Israel and studied at the Conservative Yeshiva for two years and then went to Los Angeles and taught Jewish Studies at the New Community Jewish High School for three years. There he was also the girls’ junior varsity and boys’ varsity volleyball coach. Uri is now a student at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem where he is participating in a program called Melamdim. According to Uri, who was the 10 year alumni speaker at the 2008 graduation, Melamdim “is a teacher training program that combines beit midrash study, pedagogic study, and an MA in Jewish thought from Tel-Aviv University.” Uri added, “what impacted me the most (from my time at Schechter) was relationships with teachers. Most notable for me were Mr. Jacobson, Mrs. Udell, and Rabbi Kavon.”



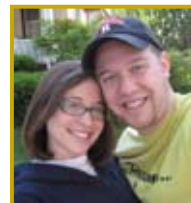
Ayelet (Rabinowitz) Teitelbaum, class of 1998

Ayelet earned a degree in management with a specialization in human resources from Lesley University. She works in human resources for International Flavors & Fragrances. Ayelet was married last year to a fellow Ramah staff member and they live on the Upper West Side, where they enjoy “the fast pace of the city and entertaining friends, particularly for Friday night dinners.” She said, “I am often reminded of my days at Solomon Schechter when Mr. Jacobson was still there and know that the values he promoted both in and out of school are very much a part of my life.”



Sarah (Cohen) Portilla, class of 1999

After graduating from Rutgers University in 2003, Sarah spent a year as a Jewish Campus Service Corps Fellow at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She then went on to earn a masters degree in



social policy and practice from University of Pennsylvania and then became a program manager in the Workplace Mentoring Center for Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City before returning to Rutgers. In July 2007, Sarah became the Director of Engagement at Rutgers Hillel. Sarah said that she is “helping the students forge their own connection to Judaism.” In 2005, Sarah married Dan Portilla, who she met at Rutgers as an undergraduate, and they recently bought a home in Monmouth Junction. Looking back at her Schechter education, Sarah said, “It taught me how to own my Jewish experience. I didn’t realize at the time how superior the Jewish and [secular] education is; the level of learning is much higher than you knew when you were in school.”

Aaron Soffin, class of 2000

Aaron Soffin graduated from Yale University with a BA in film studies. He was awarded the Howard R. Lamar prize for best senior film for “The Same Moon,” an hour-long documentary which tells the story of an American aid group’s interaction with AIDS and AIDS orphans in Ethiopia. Aaron shot, directed, and edited the piece under



A 10 Year Retrospective

the advisement of D A Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus. He also had the unique experience of working with three legendary documentary filmmakers and interning for Bill Moyers and Al Maysles.

Aaron spent most of 2005 working at Storyteller Productions in Brooklyn, with director/cinematographer Andrew Berends. Working with 150 hours of footage Andrew shot in Iraq in 2004. He cut two feature documentaries, *The Blood of My Brother*, and *When Adnan Comes Home*. Both films premiered at IDFA, Amsterdam's documentary film festival, in successive years. *The Blood of My Brother* showed in American theaters in the summer of 2006, and *When Adnan Comes Home* won Best Documentary at the Vail Film Festival.

In 2007, Aaron worked with Kim Connell to edit *Four Seasons Lodge*, the story of a summer escape in the Catskills for a group of aging Holocaust survivors. The film premiered at the Silverdocs Documentary Festival in 2008.

Aaron recently finished editing *The Return of the War Room*, Chris Hegedus and D A Pennebaker's new film about the 1992 Bill Clinton campaign, a commission for the Sundance Channel. He has also been associate producer for Andrew Berends' new film, *Delta Boys*, in which Berends explores the militant camps of the Niger Delta Struggle. Aaron is currently living in Rwanda, working with a non-governmental organization, Voices of Rwanda. Aaron is interviewing survivors of the Rwandan genocide and compiling these testimonies for the organization's archive. He is also pursuing documentary projects of his own while in Rwanda.

Blair Kaminsky, class of 2001

Blair graduated in 2005 from University of Pennsylvania, where she majored in history and economics. At Penn, she was co-chair of the Holocaust Education Committee and a reporter on the school newspaper, *The Daily Pennsylvanian*. After college she attended Harvard Law School, graduating this past June. In law school, Blair served as an editor on the *Harvard Law Review*. This year she is working as a law clerk for The Honorable Judith W. Rogers, a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. She works in Washington, DC, and lives in Northern Virginia, just a few blocks from her brother, Dustin, who graduated from Schechter in 2003.



According to Blair, "Schechter prepared me for college and the rest of my life (thus far) in many ways. The dual curriculum and my commute from central Jersey helped me learn to budget my time. Because I figured out how to juggle

school work, extracurricular activities, and a social life while in high school, I have been able to lead a more balanced life since graduating from Schechter. More substantively, Rabbinics and other Jewish studies classes helped me develop the reasoning skills that I relied upon heavily in law school and still utilize as I begin my legal career."

Aliza Wohl, class of 2003

Aliza spent her freshman year of college in Israel on the Nativ College Leadership Program. She spent the three years after that at Binghamton University and graduated in 2007 with a BS in human development. Aliza is spending this year in Israel as a madricha for Nativ and next year she will begin working on her masters in occupational therapy at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia.

Alex Fineberg, class of 2004

After graduating from Brandeis University in December 2007 with majors in English and history and a minor in politics, Alex is currently attending Rutgers School of Law, Newark.

Amy Winiker, class of 2006

Amy is currently in her third year at Northeastern University in Boston, majoring in communication studies and minoring in human services. According to Amy, "my school is very unique as it is a cooperative-education university, meaning it believes in learning outside the classroom as well as inside of it. This is similar to the senior year program at SSDSEU, where I worked full-time during the last semester at United Way of New York City as the Special Events Intern. The experience was wonderful and it gave me a great understanding of the business of event planning for non-profit organizations, the field in which I eventually want to go into when I graduate." Next semester Amy is planning to study abroad at the Rothberg International School at Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel, along with several of her friends from SSDSEU. During the summers since graduating from Schechter, Amy has been a counselor at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires and plans on returning next summer as well.



Amy said that "in a very clear way, Schechter prepared me for my college and career as I was able to take advantage of the senior year internship program and it steered me in the direction that I knew I wanted to go into – event planning for non-profit organizations. In addition to the internship program, all the *tzedakah* projects in school really inspired me to incorporate that into my future career as they have always been an important component to my life."

Rebecca Linfield, class of 2007

Rebecca is currently a sophomore at Yale University, where she is serving as Religious Life Chair of Yale Hillel and is majoring in mathematics and philosophy. Rebecca has been teaching Text at Ramah Wisconsin for the past two summers and participated in the Goldstein Leadership Seminar for Ramah staff this past January.



Rebecca has already taken two text-based Jewish studies courses at Yale, one of which was conducted entirely in Hebrew. Rebecca says, "I am grateful to my teachers and fellow students at SSDSEU for engaging with me on a common intellectual journey."

Simona Caplan, class of 2007

After graduating from Schechter, Simona spent a year in Israel taking classes at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem. She has spent her summers working at Camp Ramah Nyack as a lifeguard and recently became certified as a lifeguard instructor. She hopes to begin teaching swimming and lifeguard classes throughout the upcoming year. Simona is currently a freshman at NYU. Although she has not yet decided on a major, she is interested in religious studies and music.



Simona said, "The experiences I had when I was studying at Schechter prepared me for college, especially in terms of Judaism. I am currently running for the Religious Life and Pluralism Chair as part of Hillel, and I believe my interest in different spectrums of Judaism stemmed from my studies and experiences at Schechter. Additionally, my ability to speak and understand Hebrew comfortably during my year in Israel was certainly partially thanks to my years at Schechter."

Eliana Light, class of 2008

Eliana is currently on the Israel program, Nativ, run through United Synagogue. For the first semester she is living at the Fuchsberg Center in Jerusalem and studying at the Conservative Yeshiva. Next semester she will be volunteering in Yerucham. Eliana said, "I am loving the program. Adam Talmud, also in my class at SSDSEU, is here as well."

Dov Fields, Class of 2008

Dov is studying at Yeshivat Maalei Gilboa in Israel. He will attend Abert A. List College in the fall.



We would also like to acknowledge the following past recipients of the S. Hirsch Jacobson Fellowship who could not be reached for an update: Jason Rogoff (class of 1999), Ariel Zell (class of 2000), Sunny Yudkoff and Josh Kipnees (class of 2002), Nitzan Ziv (class of 2003) and Shai Romirowsky (class of 2004).

Supporting Schechter – Development Update

Celebrating the MetroWest Day School Campaign and SSDSEU!

Jewish day schools and private independent schools around the country are focusing on the importance of growing their endowments in order to assure financial stability for our schools long into the future. In April, 2007 the MetroWest Day School Campaign was initiated by the Jewish Community

Foundation of MetroWest in partnership with the three day schools in our community. This campaign was launched to create an endowment to enhance academic excellence and affordability. An exciting new matching program was made possible thanks to the generosity of community leaders and day school supporters – Jerry and Paula Gottesman. Four Schechter families came forward as the founding donors to this initiative – Wendy and Gary Balter, Joyce and Neil Goldstein, Shelley and Chick Paradis and Ed and Barbara Zinbarg.

Last June, former SSDSEU student Daniel Och and his wife Jane presented our school with a challenge. They gave the school a \$1M gift for High School affordability with a challenge to



raise another \$1M in just 10 weeks that would leverage an additional \$2M in funds for our school, from the Ochs and the Community Fund. Thanks to the generosity of so many donors, our school met the Och Endowment Challenge and raised \$1.7M in commitments so that in total, SSDSEU raised

\$4.7 million in that short time period. A tremendous thanks goes to the volunteer school leadership that worked so tirelessly on this effort: Board of Trustees Chair Eleanor Kramer, Golda and Michael Och, Shelley Paradis, Sheryl Pearlstein, Alison Grann and David Gutstein and many others.

Because of this successful campaign, last summer a new SSDSEU Tuition Subvention Program was launched to provide needed grants of \$2,000-5,000 to help middle-income families with the cost of a day school education. To date, nine school families have already been helped as a result of this new program. For information or to apply for 2009-2010, please contact the business office, 973-602-3775.

With Thanks and Appreciation

Current donor listing to the MetroWest Day School Campaign, Solomon Schechter Day School Fund for Academic Excellence and Affordability (as of November 25, 2008)

\$2M+

Jane and Daniel Och

\$250,000-\$499,999

Wendy and Gary Balter
Joyce and Neil Goldstein
Shelley and Josef Paradis
Barbara and Ed Zinbarg

\$100,000 - \$249,999

Elizabeth Brandwein Cohen and Gerald Cohen
The Darivoff Family Foundation
Alison Grann and David Gutstein
Ronni and Mark Lederman
Golda and Michael Och
The Pantirer, Pines and Schwartz Family
The Scherl Family
Sharon and James Schwarz
Ilana and Skip Vichness
Suzanne and Stuart Wainberg

\$50,000-99,999

Melanie and Steven Glass
Atara Jacobson and Scott Bieber

George Kramer
Miriam Lefkowitz and Marc Heimowitz
Jodi and Steve Reich
Harvey Reisman
Linda and Richard Ritholtz
Aleza and Joe Rosenberg
Judy and Bennet Schonfeld
Sharon and Stephen Seiden
Gayle and Larry Wieseneck

\$25,000-49,999

Anonymous
Ethelyn and Ben Geschwind
Abbi and Jeremy Halpern
Rachel Plafker and Dave Esrig
Judy Rosenberg and Randy Haase
Clare and Rabbi Murray Stadtmauer
Adam Schlesinger

Under \$25,000

Ann and David Blady
Ellen and Edward Bikales
Joan and Harvey Bucholtz
Sara Bucholtz and Rabbi Adam Feldman
Carol and Philip Goldsmith

Nancy and Rabbi Joshua Heller
Mildred and Gerald Feig
Mattye and Robert Gandel
Roni Jacobson and David Feldman
Leslie and Marc Kallus
Mark Kaplowitz
Julie Schwartz Kopel and Reuben Kopel
Susan Kraham and Adam Joseph
Carolyn and Dick Kupietzky
Stacey and David Leibowitz
Eitan Melamed
Emanuel Needle
Claire and Aaron Nierenberg
Bobbi and Mel Ostrow
Evie and Sasson Posner
Joyce Raynor and Ron Meier
Deborah Rebhuhn
Randy Ring
Robert Rosenbaum
Marguerite Sarlin
Jason Silverstein
Sarah and Jeremy Sokolic
Sherry and Jonathan Woocher
Dolores and Alan Zelazo



This important campaign is ongoing. Additional significant match funds are currently available for both cash and planned gifts through June 30, 2009. Please contact the Development office to be included in this exciting effort.

Upper School Capital Renovation Campaign - 2003 – present

As we walk through the halls of our beautiful Eric F. Ross Upper School Campus, our school community is extremely proud of the major renovations that were recently completed making our campus a state-of-the-art center of learning for our students and faculty. The renovation project included: a complete updating of the campus information technology infrastructure, state-of-the art science labs, a renovated gym, updated computer labs, enhanced security for students and faculty in a new lobby and reception area, multi-media classrooms containing smart boards and laptops, new administrative, guidance and departmental offices, and a new HVAC system. In the future, the school will be undertaking the exciting final phase of the project – the athletic fields. Approval



from the town of West Orange for this project has already been obtained.

Since 2003, over \$4.3M has been raised to make this project possible with our beloved Eric F. Ross as the lead donor. We are extremely grateful to the many other generous donors who joined with Eric to make this project possible.

Many naming opportunities still exist for donors to participate in the Upper School project. A beautiful donor wall in the Upper School lobby will recognize major donors to the campaign and will provide meaningful dedication opportunities. Please contact the Office of Development for more information.

Our Thanks And Appreciation Go To The Following Upper School Capital Campaign Donors (from 2003 – present) (as of November 25, 2008)

\$3,000,000+

Eric F. Ross

\$100,000-\$499,999

The Bier Family

Eleanor and Marc Kramer

Sheryl and Sam Pearlstein

Caren and Larry Rothenberg

Helene and Gary Wingens

\$50,000-\$99,000

Martha and Sol Eckstein/

Mindy and Stephen Goldman

\$25,000-49,999

Ruth and Bruce Bier

Anonymous

Ilana and Lance Kaplan

Marian and Robert Stern

Under \$25,000

Cynthia and Michael Geller

Estate of Robert C. Gruhin z”l

Margot and Marc Schwartz

Peter J. Herzberg Memorial Teachers Grant Fund

Last year, the Schechter community mourned the great loss of a dedicated past school president and Jewish community leader, Peter J. Herzberg, z”l, beloved husband of Lisa Chrystal and father of Schechter graduate Ben Herzberg and current 12th grade Schechter students Ilana and Arielle. Dr. Joyce Raynor, Head of School, worked with Peter when he was Board President. “He was a delight to work with,” Dr. Raynor said. “Jewish education was so important to him — that Jewish kids learn and become caring, knowledgeable, committed adults. He was passionate about the school and he was a wonderful person, an all-round mensch, and that quality always came through. He had a very open mind and was always willing to listen to the other side in any discussion. He was extremely dedicated to our school’s faculty as well.”

In memory of Peter, the family established the Peter J. Herzberg Memorial Fund at SSDSEU. This fund received a tremendous outpouring of generous donations from friends, family and the entire community. During last fall and winter, the school received donations totaling over \$26,000 from more than 200 people.

In memory of Peter and his dedication to SSDSEU and especially to our school’s faculty, the school has decided to rename our school’s Teachers Grant Fund to be the Peter J. Herzberg Memorial Teachers Grant Fund.

According to Lisa Chrystal, “Our family endorses the idea of



dedicating the funds to the Teacher’s Grant Fund because of Peter’s admiration and respect for the dedicated teachers at SSDSEU and his tremendous respect for teachers in our society. For that reason, this is a fitting memorial tribute to Peter.”

The new Peter J. Herzberg Memorial Teachers Grant Fund will continue to provide annual prestigious grants to teachers to encourage them to grow for the benefit of our students. The Peter

J. Herzberg Memorial Teachers Grant Fund will ensure that members of our school faculty will be able to participate in professional development programs outside the scope of the school’s professional development budget, including international programs and advanced degree coursework. Every spring, faculty members will be eligible to apply for funding under this program. Those who are chosen will be granted \$500-\$5,000 enabling them to pursue continuing education that will benefit their students in the classroom. Grantees will then report back on how they have used the funds to enhance education at SSDSEU.

Donations to this fund are a very meaningful way to honor a special teacher, to thank a member of the school staff, to remember a loved one, or to honor a special simcha or milestone event. If you would like to make a contribution to the Peter J. Herzberg Memorial Teachers Grant Fund, please contact Tova Silberman at (973) 602-3778 or visit our website at www.ssdseu.org, Support Schechter, Donate Now.

Grandparents Corner

Grandparents Host Successful Fall Event!

More than 70 grandparents and Upper School students gathered on Monday, October 27 to hear Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz, Dean and Professor at List College, JTS speak about "The Challenge of Day Schools: Preserving Jewish Identity in the American Environment," at the Eric F. Ross Upper School Campus. Many thanks to the Grandparents Society, especially chairs Barbara and Ed Zinbarg (grandparents of Hayley, Cory and Jesse Nagelberg) and Doris and Mike Saranga (grandparents of Josh, Noah and Aaron Pearlstein) for planning this wonderful event and for our amazing students for giving of their time and themselves! There are many opportunities for involvement with SSDSEU through the Grandparents Society. For more information on the Grandparents Society, please contact the Office of Development at (973) 602-3603.



Attention Grandparents! Congress Votes to Extend the IRA Rollover

We wanted to share some important news that may be relevant to you. As part of the recent economic recovery legislation, Congress extended a provision that permits you to use your IRA to help accomplish your philanthropic goals. If you are 70 ½ or older, you may make a gift of up to \$100,000 per year to Solomon Schechter Day School of Essex and Union or another charity from your IRA with no federal income tax impact and the gift will be counted toward your required minimum distribution. To obtain this benefit, you must instruct your IRA administrator to transfer funds directly to SSDSEU. If you withdraw funds from the IRA first and then contribute to the charity, the tax benefits are lost. This charitable IRA "rollover" is only available this year and next. We urge you to act soon to take advantage of the 2008 opportunity to make your gift or to create an endowment that will make a gift to SSDSEU every year in perpetuity. Please call Stephanie Bash-Soudry at SSDSEU at (973) 602-3612 or sbashsoudry@ssdseu.org, or Joshua W. Rednik, Executive Director, Jewish Community Foundation of MetroWest NJ, 973-929-3026 or jrednik@ujcnj.org

Grandparents Volunteer Opportunities

Our students love to see their grandparents volunteering at school! Whether you are a local grandparent or one that visits our community throughout the year, there is a volunteer opportunity for you:

- Serve lunch at the Lower School
- Package holiday treats for our students
- Help serve Rosh Hodesh snacks at the Upper School
- Read a story to a class in the Lower School
- Provide one-on-one extra help to a student

In addition, the Grandparents Society committee is looking for volunteers who are interested in helping our group plan future events, help with school fundraising, and find other ways to support our school. Please contact Stephanie Bash-Soudry, Director of Development & Alumni Relations to get involved, (973) 602-2612 or sbashsoudry@ssdseu.org.

UPCOMING DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

Shomrei Torah Major Gifts Event

Saturday evening, February 28

6:30 p.m.

Home of Judy Rosenberg and Randy Haase
Special appreciation event for donors who contribute \$5,000+

Shomrei Torah Dessert Reception

Thursday, March 26, 2009

7:30 p.m.

Special thank you event for donors who contribute \$1,000+
Home of Michelle and Jeff Landau

SAVE THE DATE!

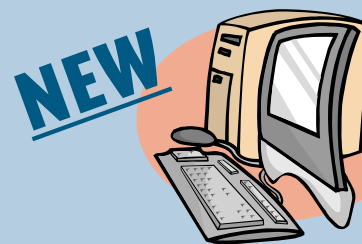
SSDSEU Annual Tuition Assistance Dinner Dance & Ad Journal

Tuesday, June 9, 2009

6:30 p.m.

Crystal Plaza, Livingston

For more information on attending any of these events, please call the Development office at (973) 602-3612.



ON-LINE GIVING TO SSDSEU

Please check out the new ways to contribute to SSDSEU via our website.

Visit us at www.ssdseu.org
– Support Schechter, Donate Now

Thank You!

News from the Parents' Association

The Parents' Association Family Fun Day was the kick off B'Yachad (community) event for the school year on Sunday, September 21st. Almost 500 people, including kids of all ages from both the Lower and Upper Schools, attended.



Since that successful kick-off event, parent volunteers have been busy serving students, as well as faculty and staff on both campuses, special treats for all of the holidays. In addition, parent volunteers have been serving hundreds of lunches each week to Lower School student participants in our new and improved lunch program.

The Parents' Association Board recently completed their review and approval process and granted the campuses almost \$25,000 to cover items on the Principals' Wish Lists. Some of the items approved to benefit the students range from a new smart board for the Lower School, funding for the High School post-prom activities, busing for *tikkun olam* trips for Lower School students, new digital and video cameras for both campuses and much more.

Coming this month is *Celebrations 2009*, a new special fundraising event sponsored by the Parents' Association in conjunction with the school's Office of Development. *Celebrations 2009* is a series of unique "themed" parties and events that will be

hosted by different families in the school community either in their homes or in an appropriate venue. The entire admission price for the party is a donation to the school. You can attend as many parties as you want. *Celebrations 2009* gives Schechter families a chance to celebrate friendship, build community and raise money for the school and the Parents' Association all at the same time.

There will be many other Parents' Association events throughout the second half of the school year. Look for your monthly PAL electronic newsletter that gets e-mailed on the first Tuesday of each month for details of these future events.

Don't forget to visit the PA page on our school's website – www.ssdseu.org, go to "Schechter Life" and click on "Parents' Association."

continued from page 1

best practices and recent advances in scientific research (like molecular and cellular biology). This began with visits to Dr. Resnick's school this fall to observe the math-science initiatives and other programs, and a visit to the Chair of the science department at Bergen Technical School.

SSDSEU is currently restructuring the senior Biology curriculum. Advanced topics in Biology will be offered in order to insure that our students are well prepared for first year university level Biology. In addition, this past summer, Ms. Gaby Sonet and students Ira Herniter and Josh Heller participated in research in Molecular Biology through the Waksman Institute at Rutgers University. The research continues through the Molecular Biology Club. Interested students can apply to continue the research at Rutgers University next summer with Ms. Sonet.

Science teachers from Kushner, HAMC and SSDSEU have already met and are beginning to share ideas. Plans are well underway for joint professional development and the creation of a website to facilitate the sharing of curricula and practices. Ms. Sonet has been appointed as the coordinator of the collaborative effort.

Differentiated Hebrew Instruction

As part of the Day School Campaign, SSDSEU is taking part in an innovative program with educators from Kushner and HAMC through which we are reexamining how we teach Hebrew language. The program is being underwritten by the MetroWest Day School Campaign Community Fund and Schechter.

Dr. Karen Gazith, Director of the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning at the Bronfman Jewish Education Centre in Montreal, is leading several full-day workshops for the teachers throughout the year. Participating teachers can then bring their newfound knowledge to their schools and share it with their colleagues.

The main focus of the workshops is differentiation: how to teach a group of students with varying interests, readiness and learning styles. Participating teachers are: Vardit Caspi, Rina Yuhaev, Yaffa Malashock, Meirav Pashcheles and Neta Shvartsman.

According to Carrie Siegel, our Lower School Director of Judaic Studies, "there is great energy among the teachers and administrators about the program. Our teachers are enthusiastic about meeting with colleagues from other schools, as well as the chance to be up to date on new teaching theories." Ms. Siegel explained that differentiated instruction is the key to students' success. Through the workshops, the teachers will be given the opportunity to talk about the theoretical aspects of this style of teaching with an expert and will discuss such topics as how our brains work and process information, as well as the differences between the way boys and girls learn.

The Och Challenge

Through the overwhelming success of the Och Family Fund, SSDSEU awarded 10 families tuition subvention grants this year. The grants of \$2,000-\$5,000 are part of the newly endowed program to make the school more affordable for middle-income families.

The Och Family Fund was created last spring when Daniel Och, one of the first students to attend SSDSEU and chief executive officer and chair of the board of directors at Och-Ziff Capital Management Group, and his wife, Jane, pledged \$1 million to the school last April. They offered another \$1 million if the school could raise \$1 million in matching funds by June 30. The SSDSEU community came through—with \$1.7 million in endowment pledges from over 60 donors. The \$3.7 million was then matched by \$1 million from the MetroWest Day School Campaign. Read more about the endowment campaign on page 12.

Families with adjusted gross income ranging from \$120,000 to \$200,000 with children in Middle or High School are eligible for these grants. The grants are per student, so families with more than one student at Schechter are eligible for multiple grants. The grants are available to current and new families.

The Herskowitz Society of the Jewish Community Foundation of MetroWest and the Partnership for Jewish Learning and Life extend their sincere thanks to all the SSDSEU faculty and students who did a tremendous job highlighting some of the wonderful things that occur in their school as part of 'Eight Everyday Miracles in Jewish Day Schools,' Dec. 14 at the Alex Aidekman Family Jewish Community Campus. Their science, athletics and Zionism demonstrations were fun, informative and educational and really accentuated the power of a great Jewish day school!

1418 Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, NJ 07052



D'var Schechter

Solomon Schechter Day School of Essex and Union is accredited by the NJ Association of Independent Schools and Solomon Schechter Day School Association. It is a beneficiary agency of United Jewish Communities of MetroWest NJ, the Jewish Federation of Central NJ, and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, NJ Region.

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We welcome your feedback about this newsletter. Please share with us your comments and suggestions by sending an e-mail to Donna Oshri, Doshri@ssdseu.org.

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Solomon Schechter Day School of Essex and Union
presents

Annual Choir Benefit Concert

Under the direction of Josh Ehrlich

February 10, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Snow date: February 11, 2009

Maurice Levine Auditorium

Leon & Toby Cooperman JCC, Ross Family Campus
760 Northfield Avenue, West Orange, NJ

Program will include performances by our

MIDDLE SCHOOL and HIGH SCHOOL CHOIRS,
as well as the **HIGH SCHOOL CHAMBER CHOIR**

Guest performance by the

Yale a cappella group, the Society of Orpheus and Bacchus

~ Featuring the release of the SSDSEU Choir's latest album! ~

PATRON TICKETS are \$120 per person, \$180 per couple.

Includes preferred seating and a mention in the Concert Program.

GENERAL ADMISSION is \$18 per person

All tickets must be purchased by Feb. 3 by contacting
Josh Ehrlich, jehrich@ssdseu.org, or any Middle or High School choir member.