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Hands-on Judaism brings 'smiles, comfort'

Mitzvah Day unites all ages in effort to help Jewish Ottawa and whole city, **Louise Rachlis** reports.

'P'eople need some hope," said Chris Johnson, a representative from StreetSmarts, as he encouraged young Mitzvah Day volunteers to put a note in their Bracha Bag care packages.

StreetSmarts is a Jewish Family Services' outreach program that offers resources, referrals and basic supplies to Ottawa's downtown homeless population.

Along with socks, gloves, snacks and toothbrushes, the participants were asked to "put on the cards what you feel from the heart, and we'll put your notes in" the Bracha Bags (*bracha* is the Hebrew word for "blessing").

The snowy Sunday February 4 morning, which began with a delicious breakfast provided by Creative Kosher Catering, brought out over 425 generous hearts of all ages to the Soloway JCC. Another 100 were at three off-site locations: Shepherd's of Good Hope, Torah High and OTC's Chabad Hebrew School. The participants ranged in age from the youngest, three-year-old Galit Petel, getting his first haircut for Hair Donation Ottawa (he was one of nine donating their hair to create wigs for children suffering from medical hair loss), to retiree Flo Morgan, an annual Mitzvah Day volunteer, who this year was helping make Havdallah candles.

See Mitzvah Day on page 2



Mitzvah Day supports not just Jewish Ottawa, but the whole city. In recognition of the day's significance, many special guests came out in support. From left: Jewish Federation of Ottawa Campaign co-chair Aviva Ben-Choreen, vice-chair of the Federation Board, Michael Polowin, Andrea Freedman, Federation president and CEO, Kitchissippi Ward Councillor Jeff Leiper, Yasir Naqvi, Attorney General of Ontario, and his son, Rafi, Josh Engel of GGFL Chartered Professional Accountants (the event's lead sponsor), and Mayor Jim Watson.



Hillel Lodge residents join Mitzvah Day participants in creating Purim masks. The event brings much joy to young and old as more than 425 volunteers turned the Soloway JCC and the Lodge into a hive of happy activity.

Mitzvah 2018 by the numbers

- 425** volunteers packed the SJCC
- 9** people donated hair for wigs
- 74** inches of hair collected for wigs
- 120** birthday kits made for kids in shelters
- 122** Care packages assembled for the homeless
- 451** sandwiches prepared for area shelters

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Mitzvah Day: Birthday kits bring joy to children in shelters

Continued from page 1

“We’re trying to appeal to all age groups, having activities for younger children, older children and grownups,” said Naomi Hirshberg Mitchell, who co-chaired Mitzvah Day 2018 with her husband, Jonathan Mitchell.

Indeed, Mitzvah Day has a broad appeal. It attracts all ages, and also reaches out to the wider community in its attempt to help not just Jewish Ottawa, but the whole city.

In recognition of the day’s significance, Andrea Freedman, president and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, welcomed many special participants. Among the guests helping out with the first mitzvah – taking the ceremonial ponytail snip for the hair donation ceremony – was Mayor

Jim Watson; Ottawa West MP Anita Vandenberg; Rebecca Hubble from MPP Lisa McLeod’s office; Kitchissippi Ward Councillor Jeff Leiper;

Shlomit Sufa, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Israel in Canada; and Yasir Naqvi, Attorney General of Ontario, and his son, Rafi. The political guests were joined by Federation Campaign co-chair Aviva Ben-Choreen, and vice-chair of the Federation Board, Michael Polowin, as well as Josh Engel of GGFL Chartered Professional Accountants, which was sponsoring Mitzvah Day for the ninth consecutive year.

A drum roll announced the big moment when the volunteers snipped off the locks of hair donors Penelope Bornstein, 8; Galit Petel, 3; Noa Petel, 5; Gila Shapiro, 4; Shayna Shapiro, 4; Miriam Tatham, 9, and adults Amanda Klein, Dara Lithwick and Mitzvah Day Committee member Yael Pfeiffer.

Hair Donations Ottawa, a charity that raises funds to fight cancer, collected 74 inches of hair to help create wigs for people suffering medically induced hair loss.

Helping fine tune the haircuts after the ceremony were volunteer professional stylists Eli Saikaly, Eli Cohen, Ken-

ton Delgreco and Christopher Lord, who shared a special post on social media thanking the hair donors: “We appreciate you helping us change lives!”

After the opening ceremonies, the crowds of volunteers took over the SJCC with groups manning various Mitzvah stations throughout the building.

In one bustling classroom, piles of cake mixes, candles, cards, and crowns were being bagged to create birthday celebration kits to be distributed to children living in shelters.

“When a child celebrates a birthday in the shelter, a mom can make a cake for their child,” said Nathalie Conners, a case manager with Chrysalis House, a first-stage emergency shelter for women and their dependents who are in violent

and abusive situations. “It’s pretty special,” she said. One hundred and twenty birthday kits will be distributed to shelters throughout the city.

In another Mitzvah room, therapy kits were being assembled for Crossroads Children’s Centre. The kits had pictograms to make it easier for children to express a range of feelings, such as blue for bored, sick, tired or sad, to red for mad, mean, terrified and out of control.

At the challah mizvah room, loaves were being braided to either be donated to the Kosher Food Bank or participants were giving \$5 to take their loaf home with the proceeds going the food bank. The dough for the challahs was donated by Rideau Bakery, which also donated all the bread for the sandwich-making mitzvah, where about 450 sandwiches were made for the Ottawa Mission and the Shepherd’s of Good Hope.

Across the parking lot, at Hillel Lodge, preschoolers were doing Purim mask crafts with residents, and there was a sing-a-long led by “Zaidy Joel” and “Bubby Toby” (Joel and Toby Yan) where families laughed, danced and sang as delighted Lodge residents clapped along.

Off-site at Torah High, high-school

“You have brought smiles and comfort to many in need.”

Mitzvah Day 2018 co-chair Naomi Hirshberg Mitchell



Mitzvah Day chairs Jonathan Mitchell and Naomi Hirshberg Mitchell volunteered to take a lead with the event to help teach their children about tikkun olam, repairing the world.



Left: Ottawa West MP Anita Vandenberg shows off the freshly snipped ponytail of Dara Lithwick while her kids sit on her lap.



Right: Mayor Jim Watson helps cut hair of a young donor for the hair donation ceremony.

They were among nine people who donated hair resulting in Hair Donations Ottawa collecting 74 inches to help create wigs for those suffering medically induced hair loss.

students prepared meals to be distributed by Ten Yad of Ottawa, a grassroots, Ottawa-based volunteer organization dedicated to undertaking acts of *chesed*.

If all this wasn’t enough, ahead of the big day, items were collected in the Soloway JCC lobby, including sporting equipment for the Multi-Faith Housing Initiative, which helps people achieve greater stability and financial security through safe, affordable and secure rental housing. Games, books and toys were collected for the Youville Centre, which serves adolescent mothers and their children. Old electronic gadgets and used batteries were collected for electronic waste recycling.

At the end of the morning, co-chair Jonathan Mitchell said that many in attendance had expressed to him “how nice it was to have all the children

involved, and a family day together, to explain to the children why we’re doing this.” Indeed, he and Naomi, took on the task of Mitzvah Day chairs for this very reason as they felt it was a wonderful opportunity to model volunteering and Jewish community involvement, as well as the importance of *tikkun olam*, “repairing the world.”

Naomi summed up the day during the closing ceremony as she thanked all those involved, telling them: “You have brought smiles and comfort to many in need.”

To help maintain the spirit of Mitzvah Day, she encouraged everyone to keep up the volunteer momentum by registering at the Volunteer Centre: jewishottawa.com/volunteering.

The fun and inspiring morning ended with a doughnut party because, well, everything is better with doughnuts!

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\$50K grant accelerates OJCS innovation plans

School hires consultants to facilitate process, ensure success

BY NICOLA HAMER
FOR OTTAWA JEWISH COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The new head of the Ottawa Jewish Community School (OJCS), Jon Mitzmacher, arrived this fall with many ideas to transform the school into a centre for 21st century educational innovation. Some initiatives required extra money, so he shelved them while he got to know his new school. Then a \$50,000 grant fell into his lap.

Suddenly, the road to innovation got much smoother.

Several months ago, Andrea Freedman, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, told Mitzmacher an anonymous couple wanted to donate to Jewish life in Ottawa.

“Jewish communal life,” says Freedman, “means balancing social services with instilling values in the next generation. The donors wanted to invest in the community’s long-term strength.” They agreed to fund three of Mitzmacher’s proposals.

Mitzmacher credits the donors for understanding that funding education does not always mean buying the latest technology. He believes the key to success is the “innovation cycle,” and that this capacity can be built into any organization.

“We can create the ability to be always asking, ‘What new things make sense for us?’ and ‘How can this work for us?’ ”

Mitzmacher, whose previous accomplishments include turning a small Jewish day school in Jacksonville, Florida, into an international leader in education, says creating this capacity takes time and effort, rare commodities in a busy school.

Mitzmacher was committed to taking it slow before receiving this grant. Now he has moved the process into the fast lane by hiring two consultants with whom he has worked previously: NoTosh and Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano.

NoTosh consultants began visiting last month and will work with the school until June to develop the capacity for a successful innovation cycle. Having gone through the process before, Mitzmacher explains it is always different, “because every school is unique.” Further, “the goal isn’t a ‘thing’ we can point to and say, ‘There. We did it.’ It’s about creating a process to ensure continued innovation and long-term success.”

As for the second initiative, says Mitzmacher, “there is growing evidence that reflective learners achieve greater success than non-reflective learners.

“Essentially, this means that students who have the opportunity to look back at their learning, to assess their successes and failures, do better. I have experienced great success with giving students the ability to ‘own’ their learning. But it’s a seismic shift in teaching, so once again you can’t just impose it. It takes work with all stakeholders.”



Kynan Robinson of NoTosh works with Ottawa Jewish Community School teachers to develop the capacity for innovation.

JON MITZMACHER

Finally, because 21st century technological innovation also does require technology, the third proposal doubled the number of iPads for classroom use.

“Jewish day schools are uniquely qualified to lead the 21st-century learning revolution by their very nature,” says Mitzmacher. “They have community connections, global connectedness, languages, and the critical thinking built into Jewish text study.

“OJCS has the potential to be a leader in the learning revolution and, thanks to this grant, we can take several giant steps closer to realizing that potential.”

Federation report: OJCS President Michael Polowin on the school’s promising future, **page 6.**

Mailbag: Why you should send your child to OJCS, a parent’s perspective, **page 8.**

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JEWISH DISABILITY AWARENESS & INCLUSION MONTH

Let's make Canada more accessible

Federation joins delegation meeting with Parliamentarians to improve policies

BY ALLYSON GRANT
FOR THE JEWISH FEDERATION OF OTTAWA

Jewish values, such as *chesed* (loving-kindness) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), motivate all that I do as Advocacy Advisor to the Jewish Federation of Ottawa. One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is advocating on behalf of local agencies like Tamir, which provides support for people with developmental disabilities in a Jewish environment, precisely because their work embodies our community's commitment to these values.

Within Canada's wider Jewish community, there are countless other non-profit agencies like Tamir working to support Jewish and non-Jewish Canadians with disabilities. As experts at the forefront of social service

delivery, these agency volunteers and professionals have an abundance of practical knowledge to share about how public policy affects lives.

That is why last week, Mark Palmer, Executive Director of Tamir, and I joined a delegation, organized by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) in partnership with Jewish Federations of Canada-UIA, and Jewish social services agencies from across the country for meetings on Parliament Hill. The timing was fitting since February has been designated Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month.

In our meetings with federal Parliamentarians, we proposed four concrete, constructive ideas that the government can implement to make Canada more inclusive and accessible for all.

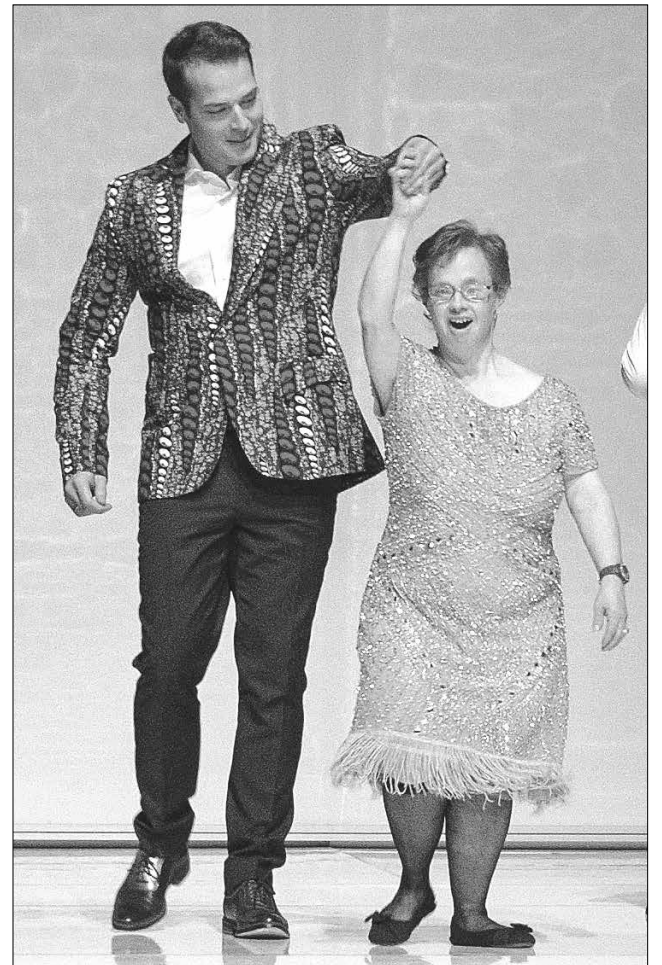
First, governments at all levels must dedicate funding for Canadians with disabilities, especially those living with developmental disabilities. Consider this: nine of 10 Canadians with developmental disabilities live below the poverty line, and as many as three of 10 homeless Canadians have a developmental disability. Dedicated funding is essential to address this deeply troubling problem.

While I'm encouraged that the recently announced national housing strategy includes 2,400 units for Canadians with developmental disabilities, all three levels of government should designate a set allocation of affordable housing funds for people with disabilities. And as we stressed on Parliament Hill, governments should ensure that 5 per cent of all affordable housing funds are specifically directed to those with developmental disabilities.

Second, there is a critical barrier in Canada's immigration laws for persons with disabilities. Fortunately, Citizenship and Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen has pledged to revise the provision of the Immigration Act that bars newcomers with disabilities from immigrating to Canada because they pose an "excessive demand" on public services. This is clearly wrong, and I urge members of the government to stay true to Minister Hussen's commitment.

Third, tax and other benefits offered to Canadians with disabilities are adversely affected if they earn any income. Employment is a positive outcome, and persons with disabilities should not be penalized for working. I encourage MPs to address this often-overlooked problem.

And fourth, I call for a comprehensive national inclusion and accessibility law. As in other countries, this type of legislation ensures high standards of inclusion are applied consistently in any area of fed-



Meredith Caplan and City Councillor Mathieu Fleury take a turn on the catwalk as part of Tamir's Stepping Out in Style, Ottawa's first inclusive fashion show, held last fall. Tamir, one of Federation's beneficiary agencies, provides support for people with developmental disabilities.

eral jurisdiction. We understand the government will introduce such legislation in 2018. This provides an opportunity for MPs of all stripes to collaborate in the creation of a more inclusive, accessible society.

At their core, these four ideas are about compassion, a value cherished by both the Jewish and broader Canadian community. In an age when political discourse has become less civil, emphasizing policies that advance our collective values is an important contribution to *tikkun olam*.

Allyson Grant is the Advocacy Adviser for the Jewish Federation of Ottawa

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JEWISH DISABILITY AWARENESS & INCLUSION MONTH

People with disabilities must be brought 'in from margins of Jewish community'

Blind visionary scholar confronts inclusivity challenges

BY OTTAWA JEWISH BULLETIN STAFF

It is an intellectual and spiritual challenge for any person to study for the rabbinate. How much greater this challenge will be for a woman who is fully blind, and must overcome all the added barriers, both physical and social?

As a rabbinical student at the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), Lauren Tuchman has chosen to confront these challenges and to share her insights as a widely respected educator. Earlier this month, Tuchman was the scholar-in-residence at Kehillat Beth Israel as part of a program for Jewish Disability Awareness Month. (While this article refers to her talk given on Shabbat, the news gathering was undertaken after Shabbat.)

"There has been much progress made to remove physical barriers and enable better access," she explained in a report published on the topic. "But we need to go further and think about access in a holistic sense. We need to move to inclusion of people with disabilities, to bring them in from the margins of the Jewish community."

Tuchman described her own experiences at JTS. She feels that by being present in a normal manner, working with other rabbinical students, she has demonstrated how managing with disability should be a routine aspect of community behaviour.

This is part of what she calls changing culture from inside out. Creating physical access – getting into buildings,

reading a prayer book in braille – are essential. But Tuchman underlines that rabbinical clergy must also deal with difficult texts and teachings. Her goal is to have Jews with disabilities adding to our understanding of spirituality and religious community.

At the KBI Shabbat dinner, Tuchman shared a set of texts from traditional sources that deal with disability issues. She showed how these are central to the Jewish narrative, citing one dialogue between Moses and God in the Book of Exodus (Shemot). Moses is commanded to return to Pharaoh and demand the freedom of the Israelite slaves. But he refuses on the grounds that his speech is impaired: "I am slow of speech and slow of tongue," Moses argues.

Tuchman stresses God's response was that all people, whatever their abilities or disabilities, are created through the unique divine power. God insists that Moses goes forward on the mission to confront Pharaoh, but Moses is also given the assistance of his brother, Aaron, to help in communicating. The double significance of this dramatic exchange shows the importance of inclusion and accommodation, thus ensuring that Moses will act effectively.

As a public figure and scholar, Tuchman has challenged Jewish communities to consider wider issue of disability. "What is a normal body, what is a normal mind?" she has asked. "How can we apply the lens of disability justice in a way that actually makes the world better for all of us?"



As a public figure and scholar, Laura Tuchman has challenged Jewish communities to consider wider issue of disability. "What is a normal body, what is a normal mind?"

Tuchman feels that by being present in a normal manner, working with other rabbinical students, she has demonstrated how managing with disability should be a routine aspect of community behaviour.

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**FEDERATION
REPORT**



**MICHAEL POLOWIN,
OTTAWA JEWISH
COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Community school's future looks bright

a lot of work ahead of us, but those of us down in the trenches are beginning to feel that we are in a moment, and that things are just starting to go right.

Whitney Houston had a song that included the lyrics “I want one moment in time, when I’m more than I thought I could be, when all of my dreams are a heartbeat away, and the answers are all up to me.”

Let me give you a taste of what we are accomplishing at OJCS under the leadership of the board and Jon Mitzmacher.

Morale among our staff is higher than it has been in a decade or more. Our wonderful teachers are more engaged than ever, and our students reap the benefit.

Recently, due to the generosity of donors and the work of both Jon and Jewish Federation of Ottawa President Andrea Freedman, we have obtained a \$50,000 gift, which we will be using with a group called NoTosh, to further innovation at OJCS.

We are working with our local pulpit rabbis through our Rabbinical

Morale among our staff is higher than it has been in a decade or more. Our wonderful teachers are more engaged than ever, and our students reap the benefit.

Advisory Committee to put the “J” back in OJCS.

We continue our work with education consultants Prizmah, to strengthen our board and its contribution to the life of the school. We are also enrolled in their matching program for our fundraising development, which will help us bring needed funds into the school to help us improve.

Early numbers suggest a great year of recruitment ahead, contributing to the momentum we are all feeling.

We have entered into a great partnership with the SJCC to evolve its Ganon Junior Kindergarten. Working together for the benefit of the community, we have embarked on a three-year

program to transform the Ganon program into the OJCS JK, so that in three years, it will be entirely an OJCS school program. In the interim, we will work to bring the OJCS three-language curriculum into Ganon.

And finally, we have been collecting information about our outcomes for students once they leave OJCS. Working with parents and other schools, what we are discovering is what we thought all along – OJCS students are well prepared for their futures when they leave our doors. We will be disseminating this information in a variety of ways – stay tuned. To sum up, while we work to make our community school better and better, what we are finding is that it is already pretty great!

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks said: “If you want to save the Jewish future, you have to build Jewish day schools – there is no other way.” Join us as we work to build and better one of the most important on-ramps to the Jewish super highway.

Michael Polowin is the President of Ottawa Jewish Community School.

Do you remember that feeling, back when you were in school, and you had a bad case of the “exam nerves”? I do. Particularly back in law school, writing my first law-school exam. But then you’d turn the paper over to read the questions and think, “I can do this – this is going to be OK.”

When I agreed to become the President of Ottawa Jewish Community School (OJCS), there were those who thought it might be a difficult row to hoe. And don’t get me wrong, there is

**FROM THE
PULPIT**



**RABBI CHAIM MENDELSON,
CHABAD OF CENTREPOINTE**

Thank you, I love you, Bubby

crossword puzzles, Scrabble, gifts, an easy laugh, elegance, class, moral values – but most of all, the word that comes to mind is selflessness.

When gazing into a Bubby’s eyes, the only thing you see staring back at you is love. You are never judged. The pride on her face when hearing of your accomplishments is priceless. It does not matter if you are 38 years old, when sitting in front of a Bubby, you suddenly feel like you are eight years old. When she tells you to finish the food on your plate, you happily oblige. When she asks you how you are feeling, you actually tell her the truth. You feel more honest in front of your Bubby, you feel more pure. You want to curl up next to her and listen to a story.

When I was 11, I spent six weeks of my summer in Israel with my grandparents. Every day, my Zaida would wake me up early and off we would go, touring the beautiful sights of Eretz Yisrael. My Zaida was young and strong and he was determined to give me a trip I would never forget.

After a long day, I would come back to my Bubby. She was always waiting with a big hug and a delicious meal. I was always so excited to tell her about everything I saw that day and she always listened attentively, like I was the only thing on her mind.

I remember sitting next to her on the

In my imagination when I hear the word Bubby, I think fierce pride, tight hugs, kisses, a listening ear, loving advice, hot food, delicious salmon, crossword puzzles... but most of all, the word that comes to mind is selflessness.

balcony on those long Shabbat afternoons watching her concentrate on a puzzle. I would look at her beautiful face and I felt so safe. It was not her physical strength that made me feel safe, rather it was her emotional strength.

And now, as I looked at her through tears in my eyes, the roles were suddenly reversed. She looked weak and frail – I was meant to give her comfort. I kissed her on the forehead and held her delicate hand in my hand. I closed my eyes and, in my mind, I said thank you. Thank you for making me who I am today. Thank you for loving me so fiercely. Thank you for being an example of morals and values. Thank you for being the best Bubby.

Then I opened my eyes and said out loud: I love you so much, Bubby. Then all I saw was my beautiful, strong Bubby.

Ireceived a shocking phone call. It should not have been a shock, but to me it was shocking. My Bubby, 92 years old, has been moved to a hospice. The doctors are predicting her end is near.

I knew that I must travel to Israel to see my Bubby.

After arriving at Ben Gurion, I went straight to the hospice. My Bubby was lying in bed, her eyes closed and her breathing heavy. My aunt and uncle stood at her bedside.

My head began to throb. My knees began to buckle. As a Rabbi, I have witnessed this scene before, but this was different. It was my Bubby

In my imagination when I hear the word Bubby, I think fierce pride, tight hugs, kisses, a listening ear, loving advice, hot food, delicious salmon,

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FROM THE
PUBLISHER

ANDREA FREEDMAN

One of the luxuries I have as publisher is relying on our excellent editor, Michael Regenstreif. Each and every edition, he does extraordinary work to ensure that the Bulletin's coverage is balanced, thought provoking and of interest to a wide array of readers.

Michael is currently taking a medical leave from the Bulletin to recover from heart surgery and we wish him a speedy and full recovery and look forward to his return in April.

I am pleased to report that we have hired a former Ottawa Citizen editor, Laura Robin, a seasoned and extremely well-respected journalist, to serve as interim editor during Michael's absence. Also on an interim basis, I have agreed to take responsibility for the editor's column and will do

Early reflections hold up: Ottawa still truly vibrant Jewish community

my best to fill Michael's large shoes.

The truth is, I don't get nervous about many things. Adventure activities such as paragliding or shark cage diving are a piece of cake for me. Public speaking? Absolutely no issue. Same thing for decision making, meeting with unhappy people, and so on. However, writing this "From the Publisher" column is an entirely different matter and so in the interest of full disclosure, I will confess my anxiety.

In part, this stems from knowing that the published word, particularly since the all editions of the Bulletin are digitized, is preserved for all time. What happens if new information causes you to cringe at what you once believed? People do evolve as does what is politically acceptable and what is less so.

Then again as Ecclesiastes wrote "there is nothing new under the sun." And so I was quite amused when I remembered discovering a column I wrote for the Bulletin on January, 17, 1994, entitled "maintaining a Jewish identity" when I was a graduate student at Carleton University.

While I like to think my writing style has evolved and matured over the years and certainly I would change a few things (and laugh fondly at the reference

to Mirabel airport), I stand firmly behind the essence of the message of a 20-something-year-old student on how Ottawa is a wonderful Jewish community and leading a Jewish life is worth the effort. For your reading pleasure and in the interest of not exceeding my allotted words count, here is an annotated version:

Last year I learned the meaning of Judaism, simply by living and working in Israel. The Jewish spirit is pervasive in Israel, from Eilat to Kiriat Shmona, from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem...

Celebrating one's Jewishness comes very easily and naturally when in Israel. As my plane touched down at Mirabel airport, many thoughts raced through my head. Who would I speak Hebrew with? What if a course conflicted with a Jewish holiday? Most importantly, could I lead a full Jewish life in Canada? To further complicate the issue, I was moving from Montreal to Ottawa, a city which I knew very little about.

What I have discovered since moving to Ottawa is that while it is much more difficult to be a Jew in Canada, the rewards are worth the effort. Recently, the Jewish Student's Union (JSU) held a Judaism Day at both the University of Ottawa and Carleton. Nothing could have made me

prouder of my Jewish heritage. The display was both eye catching and informative. It was a positive day for both Jews and non-Jews alike, as many questions were asked, and many Jews were eager to talk about their heritage. By setting up such a display at the universities, the JSU exposed itself to potential criticism or anti-Semitism, but is a risk that is well worth taking....

When I moved to Ottawa, I was quite unsure what to expect. After having lived in Israel and having attended McGill University, I was used to being in a Jewish atmosphere. However what Ottawa has given me in terms of a Jewish identity is invaluable. What I have seen is a very active, vibrant Jewish community, which in turn breeds a very active student body. What makes the community so special, and specifically the JSU so much more impressive, is simply the fact that the Jewish student population is not that large....

Five years ago, after a long absence, I returned to the scene of my youth and am delighted to report that Ottawa continues to be an exceptionally vibrant Jewish community and a wonderful place to live and to do Jewish. (A full version of the article can be found at www.archive.org/details/ottawajewisharchives.)

IDEAS AND
IMPRESSIONS

JASON MOSCOVITZ

Kudos to the CBC program *Marketplace* for its investigation into long-term care homes in Ontario. It was shockingly disturbing with an abundance of video evidence that would turn anyone's stomach.

The headline tells the story of hapless souls abused by caregivers in unforgivable ways. Before thinking abuse and neglect would never happen in one of the finest homes in Ontario, take a breath and exhale slowly.

One of the worst examples cited in the CBC investigation was the renowned Baycrest, which is a provincially funded long-term care home with deep roots in Toronto's Jewish Community.

When the video shows an elderly resident savagely beaten by another resident

Long-term care must become priority

with dementia, when the resident dies four days later and the family is lied to for months until the video surfaced, you have to wonder how, what, where and why.

You have to ask every question there is to ask. While the death was unusual, the altercation is more of a frequent occurrence than one would imagine. Shortage of personnel means no guarantee of timely intervention when required. There is no law in Ontario regulating the number of personal-care workers per resident.

In another long-term care facility, a camera catches a personal-care worker punching an elderly bed-ridden man in the face. Then there was the personal-care worker who removed a diaper and menacingly put the contents under the nose of the resident.

The *Marketplace* investigation clearly indicated these incidents were snapshots of a pattern of abusive acts directed at residents – our most vulnerable and frail citizens and, for many of us, our loved ones. Those unfortunate people have nowhere else to go because of the physical or mental state they are in. Once in long-term care, no one ever goes home. Where there is no hope, there is little joy.

While several homes in Ottawa were investigated by the CBC, our community's Hillel Lodge was not. Its docu-

mented standing for years as a well-run facility with top grades in the caregiver-to-resident ratio did not make Hillel Lodge much of a story. There is an important reality though: Hillel Lodge's ratio has fallen from the top to the middle of the pack in the Ottawa area.

And even with its good record, Hillel Lodge had a setback in 2014 when a resident died from a fall while being put in bed from an automated lift. Trying to be helpful, a caregiver made a mistake.

In every long-term care home, this focused public scrutiny increases the need for full disclosure. Then there are the tight budgets, rising wages and increasing demands, which collectively take a toll on all homes, even the good places such as Baycrest and Hillel Lodge. Managers operating long-term care homes were dealt cards from the bottom of the deck.

When the Ontario government closed specialty hospitals for the mentally ill and developmentally challenged, the long-term care homes were often the only places these people could go. An already beleaguered system had to unexpectedly take on a whole new set of residents with their own special, diverse and time-consuming needs.

The available dollars only go so far. Managers simply don't have enough

money to fill their staffing needs. It reminds me of the budget-cutting days I saw at the CBC, when the mantra from the bosses was "we are going to do more with less." But that was about television. This is about people.

One solution, if the resident or the family has the money, is to hire a companion to help the resident get through the day. The underlying reality is that the publicly funded system often leaves severely challenged people alone most of the day languishing in a hallway.

The long-term care system is cranking when it should be preparing for the tsunami of baby boomers soon to come. The numbers are staggering. It is unthinkable to consider the horror show around the corner.

It is only when you get older, as you begin thinking about these things that you realize our federal Health Care Act makes no provision for long-term care. There are no standards, no rules, and no earmarked money.

As for the province, bluntly put, Ontario is already strapped trying to put more money in big hospitals for people with futures.

Today and tomorrow's crisis be damned – long-term care is not a government priority.



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A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE: WHY YOU SHOULD SEND YOUR CHILD TO OTTAWA JEWISH COMMUNITY SCHOOL

I write this letter in response to "Modern Mishpocha: On where our daughter will go to school" by Stephanie Shefrin (January 31, 2018.) I am a mother of three and an alumnus of a Jewish day school in Montreal, my children attended two day schools in Toronto and one currently attends Ottawa Jewish Community School (OJCS).

Comparing a day-school education to a public school education is neither simple nor entirely fair. For me, Jewish day school is different from public school in two important ways. It is private and it is Jewish.

At all Jewish day schools, children experience a high quality and rigorous curriculum that is designed to prepare them for any future high school they choose. They are taught a curriculum, among like-minded peers, whose parents have also chosen this high-level rigorous education for their children. Without getting into specifics, a Jewish day school graduate is prepared for high school and beyond. There are countless ways this happens each day: small class sizes, enrichment, individual supplementation, field trips, chess club, etc.

Jewish day school is also Jewish school. Each school may have a different slant, but, generally your child will learn about Jewish religion, Hebrew and Israel. They will be immersed in surroundings that



OTTAWA JEWISH COMMUNITY SCHOOL

are Jewish with Hebrew letters on the wall, prayer in the morning time and an overall Jewish approach. As a smart person recently said, there would be no OJCS if not for the J.

For me, these two parts combined, made my decision to send my son to OJCS an easy one. Seeing the smart, confident and happy boy he is since he began in September has made my decision to re-enroll him there an easy one.

You can receive a high level education and a Jewish education by adding Jewish afternoon school to a secular education, but for me, the whole is not equal to the sum of its parts.

I encourage all who attended a day school themselves to look back at their education and to visit OJCS and then to make their own very educated decision for themselves.

If teaching your child about Judaism is of interest to you, and if the high cost is at all manageable for your family's finances, then I highly recommend sending them to OJCS.

As for the early closures on Friday, this, for me, is a small hurdle to jump for all the benefits I receive in return.

I agree whole heartedly that "one's community becomes made up of those with whom your child attends school." I would only add synagogue to this, since synagogue attendance also gives your family another community to be a part of.

I feel blessed to have been welcomed into the OJCS community and I look forward to (hopefully!) welcoming you and many others next year!

Dr. Mira Liebman

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Israeli Paralympic Gold Medalist shared powerful story with Hillel students. From left, Dovi Chein (Hillel Ottawa), Anna Kos (JNF University) Noam Gershony (guest speaker, Israeli Paralympic Gold Medalist, Tennis) Lynda Taller-Wakter, Dan Mader (Board Chair).

**Israeli Paralympic Gold Medalist
tells Ottawa students: People have
more power than they think...**

One week after his Apache helicopter crashed during a mission to the northern border of Israel, **Noam Gershony** woke up in a hospital bed. He could not speak as his broken jaw was wired. He could not move his legs – he would later learn that his left leg was paralyzed and his right leg was damaged. His back was broken – it would be surgically remedied with metal.

Gershony learned that his best friend and flight partner, Ron, had died in the crash. And he would lose another close friend three days later. After his friends' parents visited him, he committed to never being depressed.

Rehab does not restore you to your former self

"Rehab is a word a lot of people use; but you don't get rehabilitated to yourself," he said. "Things have changed and you force yourself to focus on what you have versus on what you lost." He lost the basic ability to walk, run, jump. "Everything disappeared in one night." Before the crash, Gershony skied, bungee-jumped, wake-boarded. With the help of doctors and family support, he started to build up his upper-body strength and got back into sports. *Then he discovered wheelchair tennis.* It was a dream, Gershony said. Within a short period of playing, he was invited to the US Open and then the Australian Open.

Gold medal realized six years after the crash

In 2012, Gershony represented Israel at the London Paralympics. He made it to the finals, beating the American to win the gold medal. Six years after the crash he feels lucky. "I spent 2 ½ years on a wheelchair. My life is great." He says people without disabilities give themselves excuses. "People have more power than they think; they just have to make a decision. I'm in pain, embarrassed; can't even walk; but I can go out with a beautiful girl in Tel Aviv (he pauses, smiles)...two beautiful girls."

Inscriptions in JNF Sefers in Jerusalem

Landon Daniel Gencher inscribed in Sefer Bar Mitzvah by Bubbie Leah Gencher

Madison Sky Honigman inscribed in Sefer Bat Mitzvah by her father Allan, Bubbie Hennie and Uncle Mark.

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Mayor Jim Watson joins other attendees in holding a "We Remember" sign during the International Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony, January 26, at Ottawa City Hall.

**With hate on rise, it's critical
to remember Holocaust, mayor says**
City Hall ceremony marks solemn day with proclamation

BY NORAH MOR

International Holocaust Remembrance Day which falls on the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp by the Soviet Army on January 27, 1945 was marked locally with a ceremony at Ottawa City Hall on January 26.

The ceremony was held the day before the anniversary because it fell on a Saturday this year.

"We should take every possible opportunity to remember the Holocaust and educate about it," said event MC Daniel Stringer of the Wallenberg Citation Initiative.

"Today, with hate rising globally, it's important to remember the victims of the Holocaust and teach tolerance," said Mayor Jim Watson in his remarks.

During the ceremony Watson presented a proclamation from the City of Ottawa marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day to the Centre of Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES) at Carleton University which was accepted by CHES committee member Annette Wildgoose, a child of a Holocaust survivor from Germany.

CHES Director Mina Cohn said this was the first time such a proclamation was made in Ottawa.

"Mayor Watson also urged all citizens of Ottawa to commemorate this day to honour all victims of the Nazis," said Cohn. "With anti-Semitism on the rise, the mayor's proclamation is clearly very meaningful."

"I was lucky to find good people who risked their lives to save me and my family," said Holocaust survivor Vera Gara at the ceremony. "They were ordinary, common people and they have to be honoured."

"We see the current rise in anti-Semitism and xenophobia today and ask 'where did it come from?'" said Rebecca Gara, Vera's granddaughter, during the ceremony. "How do we confront these things?" she asked.

Vera Gara said the answer is education and noted she has been devoted to visiting classrooms to help provide Holocaust education over the years.

"We need to turn on the lights and see that there's nothing to be afraid of," said Vera Gara.

"Rebecca reminded us that we do live in difficult times and that we have to stand up against it," said Stringer in reference to rising levels of

"Today, with hate rising globally, it's important to remember the victims of the Holocaust and teach tolerance," said Mayor Jim Watson.

hatred in today's world.

"We're passing the torch [for Holocaust education] from survivors to the second and third generations," he said.

Kaddish was recited by Rabbi Eytan Kenter and all in attendance joined in the international campaign to create collective solidarity for Holocaust remembrance by being photographed holding signs reading, "We Remember." The photos were shared globally on social media.

The ceremony was co-sponsored by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, the Jewish Federation of Ottawa, CHES, the Embassy of Israel, and the Wallenberg Citation Initiative.

We remember: Youngest Schindler's list survivor tells UN, "it's the worst and cruelest thing that happened in the world," **page 19.**

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THANK YOU to everyone who participated on February 4!



Photos: Peter Waiser



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Share your palliative care stories to improve policies

STEVE McDONALD
GUEST COLUMN

The way a society treats its most vulnerable speaks volumes about its principles. There are few more vulnerable than those reaching the end of life.

The physical, emotional, interpersonal, and spiritual challenges confronted at life's end are immense. Just as we expect our healthcare system to be there for us throughout our lives, so, too, must it support each of us – and our families – as we enter life's final chapter.

Palliative care is a policy issue that has the potential to touch every family across the country. According to the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, only 15-30 per cent of patients approaching the end of life have access to palliative care. With Canada's population continuing to age, existing shortfalls in the system will only grow in the coming years.

While the federal government has taken the vital step of announcing additional federal funds for home care and palliative care, more can be done to ensure that no patient seeking palliative care is denied. This is why the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) has taken a lead role in mobilizing an interfaith coalition to urge Ottawa to take action on palliative care.

Working with Catholic, Evangelical Christian and Muslim allies, CIJA's efforts achieved a key milestone in late 2017 when Parliament passed Bill C-277. This



It is an extraordinary act of *chesed* (kindness) to care for a person in their final days of life. Our healthcare system, in which Canadians rightly take pride as evidence of our nation's innate sense of kindness, must do better to ensure that those who need palliative care are never denied this essential service.

bill, which received strong support from MPs across party lines, called for the establishment of a national palliative care strategy. Our next step is to ensure that the national strategy that flows from Bill C-277 strengthens end-of-life care for all Canadians.

At CIJA, we deal with a wide range of files – from anti-Semitism and hate crimes, to human rights and poverty reduction, to Canada's policy toward Israel and

the Middle East, to name just a few! Whatever the issue may be, I am always impressed by the passion and talents of our community members, many of whom do not hesitate to volunteer their expertise and experience to our work. Their insights make our efforts more effective and improve public policy for all Canadians.

For this reason, in partnership with others, CIJA is organizing an expert working group to provide us with advice regarding Canada's national palliative care strategy. An essential portion of these suggestions will be based on the patient and family experience, which is why I invite every reader to consider whether they have personal insights they can share with us.

Can you attest to the importance of high-quality palliative care, perhaps having had a loved one who received such extraordinary end-of-life care? Or, do you have a family member who, despite seeking it, was unable to access appropriate hospice or palliative care? We want to hear your stories – and government policymakers need to hear how these policies affect real lives. Email us at info@cija.ca to share your experiences with palliative care.

It is an extraordinary act of *chesed* (kindness) to care for a person in their final days of life. Our healthcare system, in which Canadians rightly take pride as evidence of our nation's innate sense of kindness, must do better to ensure that those who need palliative care are never denied this essential service.

Steve McDonald is director, policy and strategic communications, at the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) – the advocacy agent of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa and Canada's other Jewish Federations. Follow him on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/koshermcdonald>.

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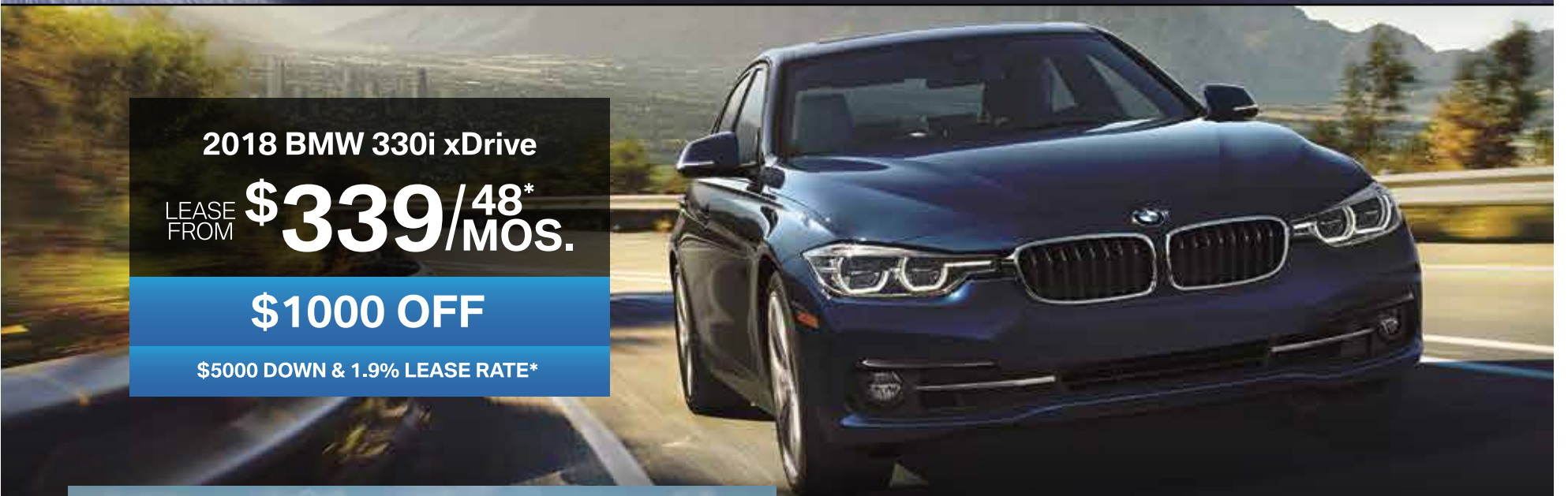
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New chair vows to maintain SJCC as ‘welcoming, inclusive hub for Jewish life’

Community centre appoints Aronson, honours exceptional volunteers at AGM ceremony

BY PAM ROSENBERG
FOR THE SOLOWAY JEWISH
COMMUNITY CENTRE

Michael Aronson was appointed the new Chair of the Board of the Soloway Jewish Community Centre at the Annual General Meeting and Awards evening, February 7 at the SJCC.

Taking the reins from Sabina Wasserlauf, Aronson has been a member of the board from 2006-2011, and was back on the slate in 2016.

“It’s important to give back to the community,” said Aronson. “The community has changed over the years, and it’s incumbent on the SJCC to continue to be a welcoming and inclusive hub for Jewish life in Ottawa by offering a range of programs and services for our diverse community.”

David Spring received the Ben Karp Volunteer Service award presented by the Ben Karp Family and the SJCC to an individual who exemplifies continual volunteer service.

Originally from Galt, a small southern Ontario town, Spring has spent his life giving back. He joined the Board of Agudath Israel where he served 10 years, two as president, and co-chaired the amalgamation committee that resulted in the creation of Kehillat Beth Israel. Spring was a member of the SJCC Board for seven years and chair from 2007-9.

On the broader community level, Spring has spent 20 years volunteering weekly with St. Luke’s, serving meals to those living on the street, he has been a member of the United Way Community Impact Cabinet, chair of its Research and Evaluation Task Group and in 2017 was awarded a Community Builders



NCSY’s Rabbi Mark Rose presents Joshua Freedman and Neilah Shapiro with the Grossman-Klein Family Teen Leadership Award at the SJCC AGM on February 7. David Spring, who was unable to attend, was awarded the Ben Karp Volunteer Award.

Award. He was on the board of directors of Big Brothers, Social Planning Council, and recently the Centre for Social Enterprise Development.

Spring is a member of the Shalom Refugee Sponsorship Group, a volunteer and supporter of Multifaith Housing Initiative; he’s been a driver for Jewish Family Services and helper at the Ottawa Kosher Food Bank.

Neilah Shapiro and Joshua Freedman both took home the Grossman Klein Teen Leadership Award for their outstanding dedication and service to the Jewish Community.

Neilah, a Grade 11 honour roll student at Sir Robert Borden High School is an avid

Mitzvah Day participant, she takes part in the community-wide challah bake and with her family has chaired two Jewish Federation of Ottawa Annual Campaign telethons and volunteers as a canvasser.

She attended OTC’s Chabad Hebrew School and following graduation, was instrumental in starting a Torah High program for students in Grade 8. She has been a regular participant at NCSY Shabbatons in addition to attending morning services at OTC Shabbat dinners, teen cooking programs and the newly formed C Teen youth group.

In summer 2016, Neilah went on a “Me to We” trip to Tanzania where she helped refurbish a school. This past summer she



Incoming Chair of the SJCC Board Michael Aronson, is welcomed aboard by SJCC President and COO Barry Sohn, Immediate Past Chair Sabina Wasserlauf and SJCC Capital Campaign Chair Bob Wener at last week’s AGM.

went to Israel with NCSY’s, The Jerusalem Journey, and in April she will embark on the March of the Living (MOL).

Joshua Freedman is a Grade 12, honour roll student, also at Sir Robert Borden, who credits his time on MOL with strengthening his Jewish identity and his involvement in the community.

Joshua lends his time to Mitzvah Day and the Federation telethon. He is a member of his school’s Jewish Culture Club and often accompanies his mother to Hillel Lodge to bring food and visit with the residents.

Joshua spent three years at Torah High and this coming summer marks his seventh summer at Camp B’nai Brith of Ottawa where he celebrated his bar mitzvah. As a gift to his favourite summer spot he donated all the camp mezuzot. Joshua volunteers his time representing CBB at various community events and will spend summer 2018 on the waterfront teaching campers how to canoe.

PHOTOS BY ALEX SARNIA

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Do you have a daughter who plays soccer?

Ottawa coach seeks team to play in Israel

BY LOUISE RACHLIS

The hunt is on for team members for girls soccer for the 2018 Maccabi International Youth Games in Israel.

The Inaugural Maccabi International Youth Games is a Junior Maccabiah that takes place in Israel every four years. The age group is athletes ages 14 to 16, born between 2002 and 2004.

The sporting competition will take

place July 23 to 28, followed by three days of touring organized by the MIYG committee in Israel.

"Israel is very excited to have us attend," said Jay Blauer of Ottawa, 49, the lead coach for the under 12 and under 15 girls' teams. "We're reaching out to virtually every soccer club in the country. I'm finding most success is through word of mouth from girls who already play with a Canadian club. They tell their friends."

The son of Cathy and the late Marvin Blauer, Blauer is the vice principal at Huntley Centennial Public School in Ottawa.

At least one parent has to be Jewish,

for a girl to be able to compete.

The first Ottawa participant for the team is Blauer's own daughter, Abigail, born in 2002, who will be 16 at the time of Games.

"The fee is \$4,850 which includes try-out, tournament, clothing package, round trip air fare to Tel Aviv, all food, transportation, everything," he said. "Often local communities will get behind an athlete or two and do some fundraising."

This year is special because it's the inaugural games for youth.

"They try to do a number of sports," he said, "but hockey was cancelled

because of arena renovations."

In Ottawa, the popularity of soccer has "exploded," said Blauer, who coaches with the West Ottawa Soccer Club.

At present, Canada is competing against teams from Great Britain, the United States, South Africa, Brazil and Israel. All athletes and staff who are part of Maccabi Canada's MIYG delegation depart Toronto on July 22.

Besides soccer, Blauer has also coached hockey, basketball, track and cross country. He feels the most important role of a coach is "to inspire" and "to teach with the ability to celebrate mistakes."

For details, www.maccabicanada.com, or email jayblauer4@gmail.com or and click under the games.



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Internet law expert Michael Geist to receive Order of Ontario

BY LOUISE RACHLIS

Michael Geist is among three University of Ottawa law professors who will be inducted into the Order of Ontario, the province's highest honour, on February 27.

Geist, who holds the Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law at uOttawa, pioneered and popularized the field of law and technology in Canada, will share the honour with fellow professors Elizabeth Sheehy and Allan Rock.

"I started in the late 1990s, and after the dot com boom there were some who said 'this fad will end.' That turned out not to be the case," said Geist, 49.

The Internet and e-commerce is a field that now affects most people. Geist says that "not all of the rules" have yet been written.

"I've been very active in trying to shape policy. I helped create Canada's first public interest technology law clinic, the Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic, which often intervenes at the Supreme Court and works to educate and better engage the public."

The Order of Ontario announcement states Geist, "represents the interests of Canadians, defending online human rights such as freedom of speech, and urging citizens to become actively engaged in government policy. His tire-



University of Ottawa law professor Michael Geist is proud of a joint course on Global Technology Law and Policy offered with the University of Haifa.

less advocacy and dedication to the public interest has exceptionally benefitted Ontarians and all Canadians."

In an interview with the Ottawa Jewish Bulletin, Geist said that one of the programs he is most proud of is "Global

"I started in the late 1990s, and after the dot com boom there were some who said 'this fad will end.' That turned out not to be the case," said Geist, 49.

Technology Law and Policy," a joint course offered by uOttawa and the University of Haifa in Israel.

"From a teaching perspective, it's one I've always been excited about. It reflects a lot of the work I do," he said.

The first week of the course is held in Ottawa with five classes focused on Internet governance and privacy law issues. Students then transfer to the University of Haifa, where the course continues for the next two weeks with classes on privacy and an examination of intellectual property policy development.

Each year, there are 20 students – 10 each from Israel and Canada – in the program who have the opportunity to experience the similarities and differences between Canada and Israel. The course includes meetings with Supreme Court justices in both countries, the Israeli Ambassador to Canada, and leading privacy officials.

The course, now in its sixth year, takes place in May and all students accepted into the program will receive a \$2,500 bursary from the Gerald Schwartz and Heather Reisman Foundation to cover travel and other costs.

"It's part of my emphasis on taking a global perspective to digital issues," said Geist, who was also a visiting professor for a short course at Tel Aviv University last year and is just back from teaching another short course at Hong Kong University.

Geist is married to Allison Geffen, a family physician, and they have three children – Jordan, Ethan and Gabi – all of whom are graduates of the Ottawa Jewish Community School and who have all been active in programs such as March of the Living and Torah High.

Geist is active on Internet-related boards, including the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (which runs the dot-ca domain), and he often appears before parliamentary committees on digital policy issues such as copyright, privacy, net neutrality, and freedom of expression.

Geist is a Globe and Mail columnist specializing in digital issues and was previously a columnist for the Toronto Star and Ottawa Citizen. A frequent user of social media, Geist has more than 86,000 followers on Twitter. More of Geist's writings are available at www.michaelgeist.ca.

Bess and Moe Greenberg Family Hillel Lodge

Get To Know Us

ADVERTORIAL



Sylvia Freeman

Sylvia Freeman was born in Nowy-Dwor, Poland in April 1923. Her relationship with the Lodge is long-standing, dating back to when Sylvia volunteered at the original Lodge on Wurtemberg by hosting a Yiddish music and discussion group with the residents. The group was called "A Bissel Yiddish". The residents who spoke Yiddish and Russian loved it. When the Lodge moved to the JCC Campus, Sylvia continued to volunteer and read to residents.

As with most of the residents at the Lodge, Sylvia has travelled a great distance and come a long way to get to Hillel Lodge. Sylvia followed her father to Canada in 1937 with her mother and brother and they originally settled in Woodstock, NB. In 1944, Sylvia went to Montreal to stay with cousins and friends. She got a job in the "schmata" business, and met Abe, her husband-to-be, on a blind date in 1946. They married in 1947 and moved to Fredericton, NB. They had three sons, and moved to Montreal in 1964 and finally settled in Ottawa in 1978. The family joined Machzikei Hadas Synagogue and to this day, continue to attend services every Shabbat and High Holidays. Sylvia who is active and independent is commonly referred to as "Bubby" amongst congregants and friends!

After her beloved husband, Abe, passed away in 1993, Sylvia lived on her own until 2016 when she suffered a bout of pneumonia and had to be hospitalized for a month. Living alone was out of the question and Sylvia moved into a retirement residence. Sylvia will tell you that her daughter-in-law Norma was her saviour. Norma took care of the house and all of the items that were in it. Her son, David,

began the process of Sylvia's move to the Lodge. As David says, "the Lodge has always been her desired choice for long-term care as it's a kosher and Jewish facility. I feel she's in a safe, nurturing environment, with caring staff". In November, 2016, Sylvia moved into the Bess and Moe Greenberg Hillel Lodge.

Moving out of her home was not easy for Sylvia. But living at the Lodge has given her family peace of mind. David says "We're lucky she's still mobile and can access the JCC from the Lodge for programming every Tuesday and eat the occasional meal at Babi's restaurant with her family and friends". Actually, Sylvia recently attended CIJA's Community Advocacy Consultations at the SJCC – as a Bubby, she brought a lot of experience and common sense to the discussion.

Sylvia loves listening to "Musica Ebraica" and "A Touch of Klez" while they practice at the Lodge and helping during activities such as visits from students from the various Ottawa Jewish schools.

Sylvia feels "everybody's very kind, the staff is caring. I help myself mostly but I do get assistance from staff when needed".

When we asked Bubby Sylvia if she would do anything different, she told us that she "never thought about the end of the game, that it won't happen to her it will be someone else." Sylvia was referring to the decision to move out of her home of over 40 years and choose to live in a retirement residence and long-term care facility. "It's not an easy decision to completely change your life, but it's better that you make the choice and adjust." Bubby Sylvia has three sons, grandchildren and a great grandchild and she will celebrate her 95th birthday in April at Hillel Lodge.

By Mitch Miller, Executive Director, Hillel Lodge LTC Foundation



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Youngest Schindler's list survivor tells her story to UN

Polish bill criminalizing those who blame Poland for Holocaust a 'disaster,' Lavi says

BY BEN SALES

NEW YORK (JTA) – Eva Lavi's earliest memories are of the Holocaust.

She remembers how her mother made her hide outside in below-zero weather, clutching a standing pipe, as Nazis searched her home in Poland. She remembers her father telling her to swallow a spoonful of cyanide — better than death at the hands of the Nazis — only to have her mother object at the last minute. She remembers seeing her twin cousins shot to death as they ran up a hill at a labor camp.

Lavi was two years old when Nazi Germany took over her hometown of Krakow in September 1939. Now 80, she wants to make sure her stories aren't lost after she's gone.

"There was no childhood for children my age," she said in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly following International Holocaust Remembrance Day on Jan. 27. "Regularly, we saw, heard and understood everything the Nazis were doing to us. At six years old, children were cynical old people trying to survive."

Lavi is the youngest survivor to have been on Schindler's list, the Jews saved by German industrialist Oskar Schindler



Eva Lavi, who was two years old when the Nazis invaded Poland, addressed the United Nations following International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27.

and immortalized in Steven Spielberg's 1993 film. Lavi was put in a ghetto in Poland with her family immediately after the Nazi takeover, transferred to a labour camp and then to Auschwitz.

She now speaks to groups at Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust authority, and travels to Poland every year with a group of high school students as part of March of the Living.

"It's true testimony from someone

who was there. It's not a story," she said. "It's the worst and cruelest thing that happened in the world."

Although Lavi now regularly returns to Auschwitz, she says the experience still isn't easy.

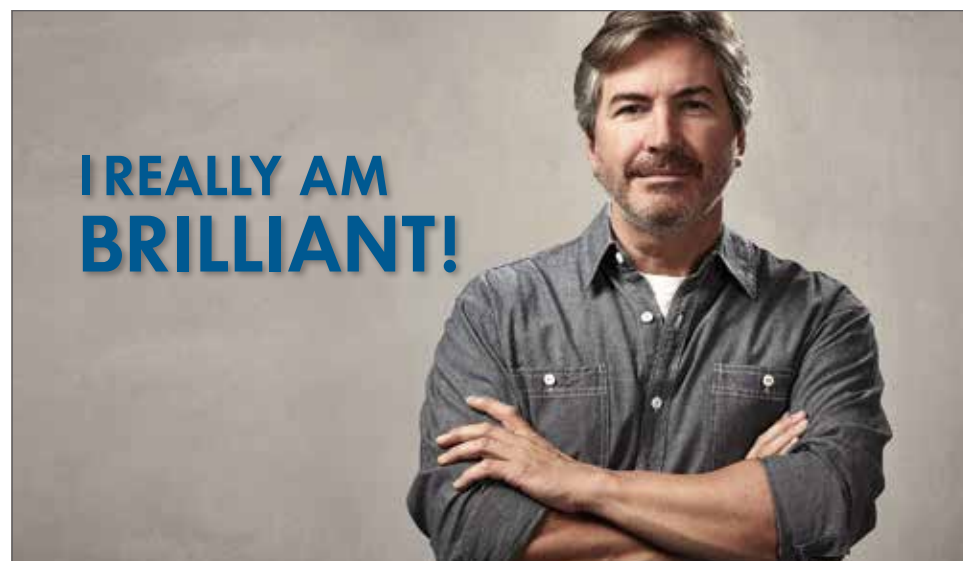
"Every time I go, I cry here and there because it's a terrible thing. Every person that went there saw the ovens, the gas chambers. Everything was real. It's very scary, but because I've gone so

many times, I take it differently. I don't think about myself. I think about how the kids are reacting."

Lavi also feels a sense of urgency in telling her story because she thinks the world hasn't gotten better since she was liberated. There are groups that still seek to annihilate Jews and other minorities, she says.

And she called the Polish bill that would criminalize those who blame Poland for the Holocaust a "disaster." Yes, she says, Poles were killed, too, at the Nazi death camps. But she adds that the Poles were no angels, citing Polish violence against Jews during and after the war. "I was in Auschwitz, and there were Polish prisoners," she said. "But what they say, that the Poles were all sweetness and light? No. In any case, they didn't really like the Jews."

As the Holocaust survivor population shrinks, Lavi feels one way to transmit the experience is movies. She's grateful for the research work that Spielberg did while making *Schindler's List*. A scene featuring her as a child, she says, is mostly accurate: Nazis separated her from her mother, but Schindler saved her by telling the guards he needed her small fingers to operate machinery.



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How Maimonides revised Halachah

**RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN
THE REPORTER, VESTAL, N.Y.
BOOK REVIEW**

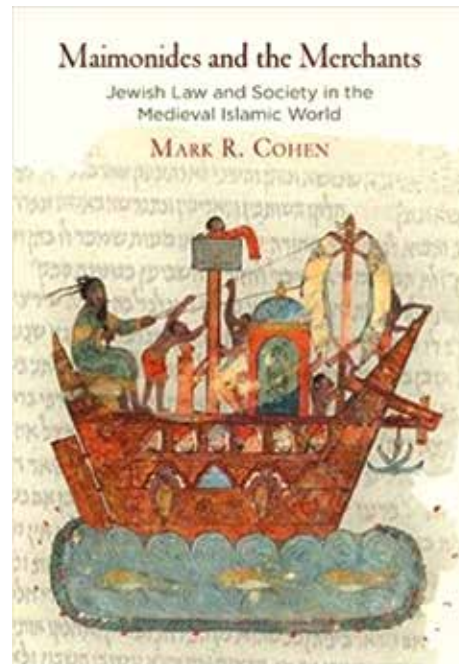
***Maimonides and the Merchants:
Jewish Law and Society in the
Medieval Islamic World***
By Mark R. Cohen
University of Pennsylvania Press
248 pages

In biblical Judaism, there is no separation between ritual and civil law. This became a problem when Jews moved from an agriculture-based society to one focused on commerce and trade. For example, after the Islamic conquest in the seventh century CE in the Middle East, international trade grew, as did the need for new laws to describe the relationships not only between Jewish merchants, but Islamic ones. In the excellent *Maimonides and the Merchants: Jewish Law and Society in the Medieval Islamic World*, Mark R. Cohen shows how Moses Maimonides revisited Halachah (Jewish law) in order to help Jewish

businessmen compete with and/or cooperate with their Islamic counterparts.

Cohen notes that “whereas the Talmud is notably deficient in the field of commercial law, Maimonides established a firm place in the Halachah for such subjects as partnership, agency, sale, leasing, and credit, consolidating disparate Talmudic statements on these subjects and, as we shall see, adjusting business law to adapt to the ways of the Islamic marketplace.” The book uses the many documents found in the Cairo Geniza to describe how these businesses actually worked; the documents include “letters, court records, marriage contracts, deeds of divorce, wills, documents concerning pious trusts, business contracts, merchant accounts, book lists, lists of recipients of charity, and registers of gifts for charitable purposes, and more.”

The author focuses on the changes made by both geonim (Babylonian scholars who were often asked by communities to decide law) and Maimonides. Cohen sees the geonim as accommodating merchant practices by employing the idea that “custom can override the Halachah.” This means that the geonim accepted the business customs of the country in which Jews



lived and allowed them to follow the civil law of that land. Jews could then make a living by participating in new types of commerce when agriculture was no longer a viable option. However, Cohen believes that Maimonides went a step further than the geonim by using the rabbinic allowance of local custom “to clothe a new reality in ancient garb.”

One example is the way Maimonides changed the meaning of the rabbinic term *ben ha-bayit* (son of the house). The name is included in a list of people who have the right to make independent business decisions, even when the money, land or business does not belong to them. Other examples in the list are guardians, partners and wives. Talmudic rulings used the term to mean the person was a foreman: someone who sells products, and hires and fires staff. Using some exegesis (which is too complex to repeat here),

Maimonides treats the *ben ha-bayit* as a commercial agent. Why would this matter? Because when someone suspects fraud or mismanagement, a foreman is not required by Jewish law to take an oath in court about his dealing, while a commercial agent is. However, Muslim courts would impose an oath on a foreman so Jews were taking their disputes to them, rather than Jewish courts. By changing the definition of *ben ha-bayit*, Maimonides allowed Jewish courts to impose an oath and made it easier for Jews to conduct their business dealings.

The picture of Maimonides that Cohen offers shows a man who thought in practical terms: Maimonides didn’t make changes for the sake of change, but to better allow Jews to make a living in a society not their own. There are times that Maimonides retains prior laws because they still fit society’s needs. As Cohen writes, Maimonides “employed a flexible and realistic approach, paying careful attention to the custom [of the country] in order to bring law and society into harmony.” Maimonides was able to do this because he claimed his code of law, “Mishnah Torah,” was simply “a repetition of the law” that didn’t change anything. Some rabbis of the time did notice, and object, to declarations that seemed removed from prior law, but many of Maimonides’ changes were accepted.

While *Maimonides and the Merchants* is a scholarly work and its prose is dry, the ideas it contains are fascinating. Anyone interested in the development of Jewish civilization – particularly how Jewish law has changed and grown – will find much of interest in this impressive work.

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Arbor Memorial Inc.

Our community's flexibility can be lesson to Israel

Nearly a quarter of a century ago, I came to Ottawa to serve as Rabbi of Temple Israel. Upon arrival, I was offered an orientation of the community by the then-executive director of the Vaad Ha'ir. After a rather lengthy explanation about community agencies, the director said "The jewel of our community is the Chevra Kadisha." It is, he said, a fine example of men and women performing the mitzvot of *Kebud Hametim*, (honouring the dead), ritually preparing the deceased for burial.

He also indicated that the annual dinner honouring the volunteers was the high point of the communal social calendar.

It was not long before I discovered that there was a "bit" of hyperbole involved in this description. Yes, there were wonderful men and women volunteering their services to perform this important mitzvot. Yes, they responded in quick fashion to the everyday and the unusual. But volunteer opportunities were limited to individuals who belonged to select synagogues and who were *shomer mitzvot*. It soon became apparent that the Chevra Kadisha had also very clear and strict rules concerning the conduct of a funeral and burial under their auspices. Women were not allowed to be pall bearers, instrumental music was disallowed at funerals, and funerals were restricted to grave site or the Chevra Kadisha building. There were other rules presented as Halachah, but certainly idiosyncratic to our community.

I knew of at least five other Jewish communities in North America where these rules were not imposed. In fact, my parents were prepared for burials by members of the Chevra Kadisha of Lakewood, New Jersey, in a non-Jewish funeral home. Their responsibility ended



upon presenting us with the certificate of Taharah.

The unwillingness of the Chevra Kadisha to broaden its definition of Jewish ritual practices created cognitive diffidence between the small "in crowd: and the increasingly non-traditional Jewish population of Ottawa.

As sometimes happens, unexpected tragedy is the impetus for change. The vicious murder of a woman who was the president of Canadian Hadassah; a former executive director of Agudath Israel synagogue and an active board member of Temple Israel forced the Chevra Kadisha to realize that religious diversity was on its door step. Faced with an ultimatum that unless they modified their rules a Taharah would be performed by the Chevra Kadisha of Montreal and that the funeral would be conducted by the Reform, Conservative and Orthodox rabbis at Agudath and women would be pall bearers, our Chevra Kadisha relented. A beautiful service was conducted the mourners were comforted and the "temple" walls were breached.

Today it is possible to say that the Chevra Kadisha respects religious diversity. Together with the Jewish Memorial Gardens, the varieties of Jewish ritual practices are honoured. It is now the Jewel of our Jewish community.

Diversity of practice strengthens who we are. Elas-

ticity ensures we bend but do not break. Flexibility is maybe our strongest ally as our community faces the ongoing challenge of modernity.

If only the lessons of the Chevra Kadisha were transferable to the Beit Shemesh in Eretz Yisroel. After years of relative quiet, violence has broken out again between Haredi (ultra-orthodox) residents and non-Haredi residents, many of whom are religious Zionists. Israeli flags are routinely ripped from houses and cars. Women, secular and religious, are spat upon and threatened with stone throwing for dressing "immodestly" or walking on the same sidewalks as men. Some women have been seriously injured. Recently a 15-year-old Haredi youth threw stones at a police car, simply because it was not Haredi. This situation has devolved into such antagonism and hostility that Haredim youth have "mobbed" religious Zionist youth movement gatherings. Authorities, controlled by Haredim, have declared it is not their responsibility to resolve religious conflicts. The situation required members of the Knesset to make an inspection of the city. The member of the Knesset who chairs the committee on the status of women declared the level of verbal and physical harassment toward non-Haredi woman as totally unacceptable. The chair is an Arab-Israeli woman, Touma Sliman, from Nazareth.

The preservation of traditional practices by a small group over the wishes and desires of the majority does not bode well for those wishing to declare Israel a Jewish state.

If "Jewish" is defined so narrowly that it excludes the majority, then perhaps they will decide that it is a title they do not need to pass on to the next generation.



March Break Fun at the Soloway JCC

MARCH BREAK CAMP
SK (Born in 2012)–Grade 5
 A fun five days of swimming, creative activities, special guests and friends.

9:00 am - 4:00 pm
 Early drop off 8:30 am
 March 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

\$49 Member per day
 \$59 Non-Member per day

Additional Child
 \$39 Member per day
 \$49 Non-Member per day

Contact Gail Lief
 (613) 798-9818 ext. 303
 glieff@jccottawa.com

March Break Travelling Sports Camp
Grade 1–6

Basketball, soccer, archery, floor hockey, dodge ball and swimming in the morning.

Bowling, golf, wave pools, skating and Coliseum in the afternoon!

9:00 am - 3:45 pm
 March 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

\$56 Member per day
 \$66 Non-Member per day

All 5 days
 \$250 Member
 \$300 Non-Member

Contact Jon Braun
 (613) 798-9818 ext. 267
 jbraun@jccottawa.com

Exercise, diet offsets osteoarthritis, reduces pain, boosts function

Osteoarthritis is a common chronic condition. Ten per cent of Canadians age 15 and over have osteoarthritis. The average age of diagnosis is 50. <https://tinyurl.com/y74lqhsq> Osteoarthritis is more common in women than men.

Osteoarthritis “is caused by a breakdown of cartilage in joints causing bones to rub together resulting in pain, stiffness and eventual loss of use. There are some forms of osteoarthritis that appear to be genetically driven and others that are a result of injury, overuse or advanced age” (Joint Health, February 2008, <https://tinyurl.com/y9ec9p6c>).

Osteoarthritis (OA) is often viewed as a normal part of ageing. OA is also linked to obesity because excess weight puts a heavier load on weight-bearing joints. Surgery to replace hips and knees has become increasingly common. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, approximately 50,000 hip replacements and 60,000 knee replacements were performed in Canada in 2013-2014. These figures are on the rise even when population growth and ageing are accounted for. <https://tinyurl.com/ycqsroz>

A Harvard study on osteoarthritis examined 2,000 skeletons including medical school cadavers and ancient remains found by archeologists. After controlling for age and weight, the study found that knee osteoarthritis has doubled in prevalence since the Second World War; while 16 per cent of the more recent skeletons had knee OA, only eight per cent of the earlier skeletons did. What are we doing or not doing differently that is resulting in more OA than our ancestors?

The researchers agree that age and obesity are two major risk factors for OA. They also hypothesize that the absence of physical activity may be what is causing



**GLORIA SCHWARTZ
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more OA in modern times. Thinking of OA as a wear-and-tear disease may be inaccurate; it may be due to more sitting and less moving. Perhaps our overweight ancestors had less OA than overweight people after the mid-20th century because they were more active. One of the study’s authors, David Felson of Boston University Medical School, says that “exercise makes the joints more strain-resistant and that the cartilage gets thicker and the muscles that support and protect the joints get stronger.” The paper’s senior author Daniel Lieberman of Harvard University states that “knee osteoarthritis is not a necessary consequence of old age. We should think of this as a partly preventable disease.” <https://tinyurl.com/y8jesfsu>

What if you already have OA? Another study examined the effects of weight loss via different strategies on participants’ knee osteoarthritis. Overweight and obese adults age 55-plus with knee osteoarthritis were randomly assigned to either a diet group, an exercise group, or a group that combined diet and exercise – 399 participants completed the study. The participants in the diet-and-exercise group and those in the diet-only group lost more weight (a mean of roughly 10 per cent of body weight) than those in the exercise-only group (roughly two per cent) and had greater measurable reductions in inflammation than those in the exercise-only group. Participants in

the diet-and-exercise group also had less pain, better function, faster walking speed and better self-reported physical quality of life than those in the exercise-only group. Independent of group assignment, participants who lost 10 or more per cent of body weight had bigger improvements in function, in inflammation and in pain, and bigger reductions in knee compressive force.

The findings suggest that intensive weight loss may have both anti-inflammatory and biomechanical benefits. Combining an appropriate diet and exercise program enables overweight and obese people to achieve improvements in symptoms greater than with just diet or just exercise. <https://tinyurl.com/ya743kvc>

What are the practical applications of these studies’ findings to your day-to-day life? With the ageing population and the prevalence of OA on the rise, a healthy lifestyle that includes staying physically active and eating well seems like a good preventative strategy.

If you already have OA, exercise avoidance is the wrong approach; it’s a matter of finding the right exercise. According to the Arthritis Foundation, “exercise is considered the most effective non-drug treatment for reducing pain and improving movement in osteoarthritis.” <https://tinyurl.com/yanmwbyk>

Exercise maintains and improves your ability to move and function and improves blood flow to the joints. Losing excess weight takes additional stress off the joints and that, in turn, can salvage cartilage and reduce pain. Osteoarthritis-appropriate cardiorespiratory exercises include swimming and using joint-friendly exercise machines such as a stationary bicycle and an elliptical. Strength training, if done properly, builds strong muscles which support and protect affected joints. Exercise can also reduce the psychological stress of living with a painful condition.

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AGE 9-12

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- Preventing accidents
- Online and internet safety
- Sibling rivalry
- How to handle emergencies and other situations
- Snacking and kitchen safety
- Basic first aid skills
- Home fire safety
- People safety

Sunday, February 25 9:00am – 4:00pm

\$77 per person

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Jewish Life Happens Here

WHAT'S GOING ON | February 19 - March 4, 2018

FOR MORE CALENDAR LISTINGS, VISIT WWW.JEWISHOTTAWA.COM/COMMUNITY-CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

Communication – Its Art and Soul

Tuesdays, 7 - 8:30 pm until February 27, 2018
Ottawa Torah Centre Chabad, 111 Lamplighters Dr.
Contact: Rabbi Blum, rabbi@theotc.org
Cost: \$90. Contrasting Jewish thought with scientific discovery. Instructor: Rabbi Menachem M. Blum

TOTally Shabbat at Temple Israel

Fourth Fridays, 5:30 – 6 pm until June 22, 2018
Temple Israel, 1301 Prince of Wales Dr.
Contact: Sue Potechin, suepotechin@rogers.com
Cost: Free. RSVP to Cathy in office 613-234-1802.
Multi-generational program for families with children under 6 years.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Family Fun Day At Machzikei

10 am – 1 pm, Congregation Machzikei Hadas, 2310 Virginia Dr.
Cost: \$5/Child (Max. \$20), Adults free. Bouncy castles, arts and crafts, family-friendly movies and a toddler zone.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Parenting in the 21st century:

3-Part Parenting Series for Jewish Families

6:30 – 8 pm, 2255 Carling Ave., Suite 300
Register: Quinn, qriviergatt@jfsottawa.com
Cost: Free. Meet with other parents as clinical experts share knowledge on how to feel more confident in parenting. Sponsor: Jewish Family Services of Ottawa.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Women's Torah Study with Rabbi Zuker

7 – 9 pm
Contact: rabbizuker@kehillatbethisrael.com
Study topics related to women in Torah and Jewish tradition. Session takes place in Rabbi Zuker's home, space is limited. Email for info or to RSVP

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Teddy Bear Shabbat - Get Ready for Purim!

5:30 - 7:30 pm, Kehillat Beth Israel Congregation, 1400 Coldrey Ave.
Contact: rabbizuker@kehillatbethisrael.com
Kid-friendly dinner, songs and prayers for Shabbat, and a special Purim story. Free and open to everyone.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Presto Change-O Purim

10 am – 12 pm, Soloway JCC
Contact: Gail Lieff, glieff@jccottawa.com
Cost: \$10 per family. Fun for all ages with one of Eastern Canada's top magician/illusionists, Michael Bourada.

Pre Purim Mother Daughter Bake

6 - 7:30 pm, Chabad of Centrepointe, 23 Palisade St.
Contact: Bassy Mendelsohn, rabbi@sympatico.ca
Cost: \$5. Mother-daughter bonding and baking.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Purim at KBI

5:30 – 9 pm, Kehillat Beth Israel, 1400 Coldrey Ave.
Contact: Rena Garshowitz, rena@kehillatbethisrael.com
Read the Megillah, have a nosh and be a superhero.

Purim Night Live @ Starbucks Chabad

6:15 - 8:15 pm, Chabad of Centrepointe, 23 Palisade St.
Contact: Bassy Mendelsohn, bassy613@gmail.com
Cost: \$10. Enjoy an array of coffees, wraps, salads and pastries. Megillah reading, entertainment, masquerade.

Purim at Adath Shalom Congregation

6:45 – 9 pm, Adath Shalom Congregation, 31 Nadolny Sachs Pvt.
Nine different people will read the Megillat Esther, costume parade, Purimspiel and hamentashen.

Glebe Shul Purim Party

7 – 10 pm, Impact Hub Ottawa, 123 Slater St., 6th Floor
Contact: Rabbi Yoey Shaps, glebeshul@gmail.com
Cost: \$15. Purim party for Jewish young professionals. Megillah reading at 7 pm, hot food and open bar.

CSN Ottawa: Purim in the Wild West

11 - 11:59 pm, University of Ottawa
Contact: Rabbi Chaim Boyarsky, rabbichaimb@gmail.com
Cost: Free. Join Sheriff "Rabbi Chaim" in celebrating Purim. Megillah reading, mechanical rodeo bull, caricaturist, photo booth. Open Bar for 19+ with valid ID.

THURSDAY, MARCH 1

OTC's Purim at Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory

5 – 9 pm, Ottawa Torah Centre Chabad,

111 Lamplighters Dr.

Contact: Rabbi Blum, rabbi@theotc.org
Cost: \$25. Welcome to a world of imagination ... an entertaining event for adult and children alike. Party featuring acrobatics Show, buffet, candy bar, desserts, Megillah reading and more.

Purim at the OSCARS

5:30 - 11 pm, Congregation Machzikei Hadas, 2310 Virginia Dr.
Cost: \$10-\$36. Megillah readings, costume parade, candlelight dinner, champagne bar and more. Glamorous or movie-theme attire requested.

FRIDAY, MARCH 2

Post Purim Friday Night Dinner

5:30 - 7:30 pm, Chabad of Centrepointe, 23 Palisade St.
Contact: Bassy Mendelsohn, bassy613@gmail.com
Cost: \$10/\$20. Three-course Shabbat gourmet dinner followed by comedy show. Children's program included.

SATURDAY, MARCH 3

Israeli House Purim Mascarade

7:30 - 11:30 pm, Soloway JCC Ottawa
Contact: Ella Dagan, edagan@jccottawa.com
Cost: \$18. Come in costume to celebrate Purim! Adult Purim party. Superheroes, movie and animated characters theme. Sponsor: Soloway JCC, Vered Israel

SUNDAY, MARCH 4

Jewish Federation - Follow Your Heart

9 am - 11:40 pm, Soloway JCC
Register: Solange, sashe@jewishottawa.com
Visit four of the beneficiary agencies supported by the Annual Campaign. Breakfast included.

CANDLE LIGHTING BEFORE

FEBRUARY 23	5:23	MARCH 16	6:51
MARCH 2	5:33	MARCH 23	7:01
MARCH 9	5:42	MARCH 30	7:10

BULLETIN DEADLINES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28*	FOR MARCH 26
MONDAY, MARCH 26**	FOR APRIL 16
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11	FOR APRIL 30

* Early deadline: Community-wide Issue ** Early deadline: holiday closures (all dates subject to change)

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ACTIVITIES TAKE PLACE AT THE JOSEPH AND ROSE AGES FAMILY BUILDING, 21 NADOLNY SACHS PRIVATE

CONDOLENCES

Condolences are extended to the families of:

Teena Goldberg

Carol Greenberg

Sylvia Monson

Graham Smith

Bryant Steinberg, Montreal
(father of Andrea Malek)

**May their memory
be a blessing always.**

The Condolence Column is offered as a public service to the community. There is no charge. For listing in this column, please call 613 798-4696, ext. 274. Voice mail is available.



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