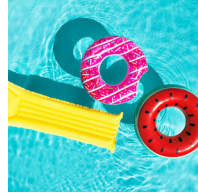




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Clinic  
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Lunch & Learn Field  
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# Jewish Community News

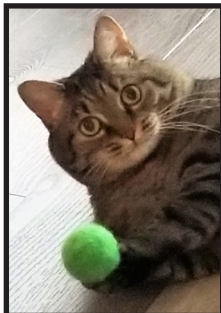
News of the Jewish VA Peninsula Community

June 2022/5782

## Executive Director's Message - Steven Wendell



Thank you, staff, Board leadership, volunteers, Jewish community professionals, and all the members of this very special United Jewish Community for the opportunity to serve over these past eight years. Charlene and I look forward to our retirement and enjoying our next life's chapter as Peninsula residents.



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## Mikveh Fund

In honor of Ernestine Adelman  
for Mother's Day  
Valarie, Matt & Sadie Blaes

In honor of Sarah Barnett  
Meryl & Bob Kessler

In memory of Sarah Deyong  
Meryl & Bob Kessler

## UJC Preschool Fund

Thank you to Sarah Barnett for  
your dedication to the  
community

Gavrielle & Lana Bargash

In honor of all my co-workers &  
colleagues with whom I shared  
so many wonderful years &  
experiences  
Sarah Barnett

## Marc Minkoff Sports

### Scholarship Fund

In memory of Dr. Murray  
Moliken  
Karen Minkoff

### UJC Youth Fund

In honor of Ellen Eisenberg's  
new granddaughter  
Joanne & Richard Gordon

## Marilyn & Mark Nataupsky

### Holocaust Education Fund

In honor of Martha Katz-  
Hyman's Blue Yarmulke Person  
of the Year award  
Dr. Mark Nataupsky

## Ukrainian Emergency Fund

In honor of my teacher, Mrs.  
Mayya Yartsev  
Hannah Karlin

## Senior Meals Fund

Thank you to Evelyn & Rick  
Mason for making the best  
holiday meal for my family  
Linda Lavaty

## Leroy M. Spigel Early

### Childhood Education Fund

In memory of Sarah Deyong  
In memory of Leonard Barry  
Spivak  
Joy & Larry Spigel

# President's Message - Kelli Caplan



It's almost impossible to believe that it's been two years since I became president of the Board of Directors. When I took over, I thought two years would feel like an eternity. Was I ever wrong!

The time has flown by, marked by successes, failures, life lessons and a love for our community that has grown immensely deeper. I am truly grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as president of such a dynamic and vibrant organization. I have learned so much about myself, our community and the huge potential we have as an organization to make a difference locally and globally. The experience has enriched me, and has allowed me to grow exponentially as an individual and as a leader. And for that, I am humbled and most appreciative.

Together, we have greatly improved our outside areas, thrived during a pandemic, increased programming significantly, grown our annual campaign, and watched as our preschool has exceeded our highest expectations. In addition, we have hired an amazing new executive director, who I am confident will continue to guide the UJCVP on an upward trajectory. I am proud of what we have achieved. The UJCVP



is on sound financial footing and the breadth of our programmatic offerings continues to grow. Our beloved J is in great shape, and that credit belongs to our amazing staff, our wonderful board of directors and our community members, who believe in what we stand for and are always willing to lend their support. We are a shining example of what a community can do when it comes together with a united goal of greatness.

It is just fabulous to see how lay leadership and professional staff work in unison toward achieving our goal of making the UJCVP an even better place than it already is. The relationship that has been forged between leadership and staff is

incredible, and as president, I can say that witnessing that in action has been one of the most rewarding parts of the job. I have adored working with the staff, watching them test new ideas and then celebrating their successes. The staff goes above and beyond every day to ensure that great things happen on and off campus. Walking down the office hallway and soaking up their positive energy and sheer love of our community is something everyone should experience. It's energizing and enlightening.

Being president allowed me the opportunity to meet so many new people and forge relationships that I now cherish. I have so much gratitude for everyone who helped guide me and offered advice along the way. Special thanks go out to Jenny David, Wendy Eisner and Steve Wendell, three incredibly special, capable, and caring people who created a phenomenal support system that every president should have.

During my presidency, I have often compared the UJCVP to a beautiful prism that bathes the community in a beautiful light of warmth and optimism. I believe in that analogy even more now than I did when I became president. I have simply been awestruck by the power of our prism. May the community continue to be graced with the magnificent light radiating from the "prism" that is the UJCVP.

As my term winds down, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for trusting me to serve as president and having confidence in my abilities. It has sincerely been an honor and pleasure to lead the UJCVP Board of Directors. I am excited to now join the ranks of past presidents and watch the J continue to soar. I wish Wendy a joyful, stress-free and productive presidency!



**Do you love pickleball? Or have you always wanted to learn to play?**  
Join our UJC Pickleball group!

**Tuesday Evenings @ 7:00pm in the UJC Gym**  
**Sunday Mornings, Outdoor Courts Off Campus**

Open to all adults 18+ Beginners & couples welcome!  
Balls & paddles will be provided.

Passport Members - FREE!  
**COVID IMMUNIZATIONS REQUIRED**

Visit [ujcvp.org](http://ujcvp.org) or email Steve Wendell ([swendell@ujcvp.org](mailto:swendell@ujcvp.org))  
for registration information.

## Red Cross Blood Drive in the UJC Gym

**Tuesday, June 7th**  
**10am-3pm**

Visit: [ujcvp.org](http://ujcvp.org)  
to make an appointment



### **Join in on the fun and get crafty with us!**

Swing by the J, pick up a jCraft To Go, take it home, and unpack your studio!

**Next Project:** Painted Summer Pineapples

**Pick Up:** Thurs. June 9th, anytime from 3-5pm

**Program Passport Members - FREE!**

**Non-Members - \$12 / package**

RSVP to: Naioki Wood ([nwood@ujcvp.org](mailto:nwood@ujcvp.org))  
or Sara Traster ([straster@ujcvp.org](mailto:straster@ujcvp.org))

*(This will be the last JCraft until the Fall!)*





## Blood Pressure Clinic

Thursday, June 23rd

11:30am-12:30pm

Swing by the J to get your blood pressure checked with the nurses from the Personal Touch Hospice & Palliative Care team.

*FREE COMMUNITY EVENT*

RSVP to Jessi Malkin: [jmalkin@ujcvp.org](mailto:jmalkin@ujcvp.org)

## UJCV Senior Lunches & Grand Club

Beginning in June, we will ONLY be offering senior lunches in-person on Thursdays at the J and we will continue this schedule throughout the summer. *Our Tuesday lunch deliveries will resume in September.*

Lunch for ages 60+ - \$2.50 | Lunch for Passport Members - FREE!

*\*Additional charges for Bingo Cards\**

Email Layne: [lmunley@ujcvp.org](mailto:lmunley@ujcvp.org) for more information or to RSVP



We are pleased to welcome Layne Munley to our UJC Office Staff as the new Administrative Assistant. Layne has extensive office experience, focusing on providing customer service and clerical duties.

Layne is from Williamsburg, has 3 grown children and a sweet parakeet.

She loves going to the beach, walking, and is an avid fiction reader.

We are happy to welcome Layne to our team!

## President's Message - Wendy Eisner



As I reflect on my 28 years in Hampton Roads, I think back to one of my first encounters in this town. I was young, pregnant and had a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter. As a young mother I was anxious about moving to a small community with a small Jewish population after growing up in Brooklyn N.Y. So, I did the only thing I knew to do, I called the UJCVP to register my daughter for the two-year-old preschool class in the fall and was so happy to find the most warm and loving place I ever could have hoped for.

Fast forward 28 years and I can honestly say this small Jewish community has provided me a home with warmth, and love. My family and I were embraced by the community from the beginning of our journey here. Of course, that leads me to today!

It is an honor to be able to give back to the UJCVP by becoming president of the Board of Directors. Many people have asked me over the last couple of years why I wanted to take on this responsibility. In framing my response to this question, I realized I needed to start at the beginning of my journey. Like so many of us, I started with my family at the preschool. I became involved serving on the preschool committee and volunteering my time assisting with programming. After a short time, I was asked to participate on an auction committee, which in turn started my

fundraising career. I remember naively saying "I cannot ask anyone for money or gifts." Once it was established that I could ask for money, I was asked to join Campaign Council. I have been on this committee for approximately 20 years.

As I embraced my UJC family, my desire to give back grew.

As for my 'why,' I have to say that to me this campus represents community. Our campus is alive, flourishing and meeting its mission. As we all know, people will come and go but the campus

is always here. It's the pillar of strength representing the Jewish people, engaging the whole community and adding value to all it serves.

As I like to say, we are a small community with a big attitude. As president I hope to see us continue to grow, prosper and succeed.

Thank you to the many volunteers and staff for all you do to make our village a better place.



# Join us for a Day at the J!

## UJCVP Annual Meeting 2022 Sunday, June 12th, 11:30am

Join us as we recognize outgoing President,  
Kelli Caplan & welcome incoming  
President, Wendy Eisner

Special presentation  
for Steve Wendell



Community  
Recognitions

Beskin Scholarship  
Award

Lunch

Ropes Course

Barnyard on  
Wheels Petting Zoo

RSVP to  
Layne:  
lmunley@  
ujcvp.org



### PJ Library Petting Zoo Story Time

Join Mrs. Jessi and some  
furry friends from the  
Barnyard on Wheels  
for an exciting and  
memorable story hour!

**Sunday, June 12th  
1:00pm**

Free Community Event



**RSVP to Jessi:  
jmalkin@ujcvp.org**



**June 17th**  
Linda Tompkins  
Sarfan Center Mazel Tots Teacher



**June 20th**  
Yainaree Garcia  
Sarfan Center Perakhim Infant Teacher



**June 28th**  
Becca Price  
Sarfan Center Nitzanim 2-year-olds Teacher



The UJC & Sarfan Center will be closed Monday, June 6th in observance of Shavuot.



The Sarfan Early Childhood Center will be closed Monday, June 20th through Friday, June 24th



## Pool Dates to Remember!

Glendale Pool will be Open:

Wed. 6/1 1-4pm	Wed. 6/8 1-4pm	Wed. 6/15 1-4pm
Fri. 6/3 4-9pm	Fri. 6/10 4-9pm	Fri. 6/17 4-9pm
Sat. 6/4 11am-9pm	Sat. 6/11 11am-9pm	Sat. 6/18 11am-9pm
Sun. 6/5 1-8pm	Sun. 6/12 1-8pm	*Summer Hours Begin!

June 18th  
Moonlight  
Swim  
8-11pm

July 2nd  
4th of July  
Cookout  
11:30-1:30pm

**\*UJC Members MUST Sign in at the Pool\***

# Jewish Family **Services** - Libby Batten

Food insecurity and the lack of finances to purchase gas is happening in the Jewish community. Currently, the UJCVP Jewish Family Services office is requesting donations of grocery or gas gift cards (Food Lion, Walmart, Wawa, 7-11 etc.)



Nonperishable food donations such as peanut butter, jelly, cereal, oatmeal, and tuna are requested for the food pantry. The food items may be dropped off in the UJC front entry-way in the box labeled JFS.

Gift cards may be hand delivered to the UJCVP office or mailed to the UJCVP: 401 City Center Blvd. Newport News VA 23606

Attention: Libby Batten

Thank you for your continued support!

**We are a campus of caring.  
Everyone deserves care.**

**RAISE YOUR HAND DAY**  
**THURS. JUNE 30TH, 9am-2pm**

If you have a problem or issue PLEASE call for assistance to find out how we can help.

*It's ok to not be ok. We are here to listen. Better starts here!*



Call our UJC Jewish Family Service Office  
Libby Batten, MSW | 757-223-5635

**THE UNITED JEWISH COMMUNITY  
WISHES TO CONGRATULATE THE FOLLOWING STUDENTS  
AND THEIR FAMILIES ON THEIR BAR & BAT MITZVAHS**

**KAIA HENDERSON ISABELLA LEVIN  
SAM SCHORR**

# Education **Corner** - *Naioki Wood, Sarfan Center*

Thank you to our sponsors, families and community for your participation in our 36th 5K & 1 mile fun run!  
For race results and lots of photos, visit:  
[ujcvp.or/sarfan-center-5k](http://ujcvp.or/sarfan-center-5k)



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**Camp Chaverim Presents:**  
**DESIGN YOUR OWN CAMP SHIRTS**  
*and meet the summer staff!*

**Sunday, June 19th**  
**11-12:30pm**

Stop by the tennis court/basketball area to pick up your Camp Handbook & Daily Schedule, design your 2022 camp shirt and meet our AMAZING Summer Team!

RSVP to Naioki: [nwood@ujcvp.org](mailto:nwood@ujcvp.org)



PLEASE JOIN US FOR A  
*"Change of Course"*  
*Community Celebration*  
*for Steve Wendell*

**SUNDAY, JUNE 26TH 2022,**  
**5 PM**

AT THE UJCV  
 401 CITY CENTER BLVD., NEWPORT NEWS



BUFFET SUPPER & DESSERTS WILL BE SERVED  
 BOATING ATTIRE ENCOURAGED

RSVP to: [jmalikin@ujcvp.org](mailto:jmalikin@ujcvp.org)  
 by Monday, June 13th

Our UJCV joins with JCCs and Federations across the country in recognizing and supporting Pride Month and reaffirming our commitment as an agency to be welcoming to ALL members of our community!



# Parent / Child Swim Class

for ages 6 months – 2 years

Thurs. June 23

Thurs. June 30

Thurs. July 7

5:30-6pm

Join your little one in the water for songs, beginning water skills & water play activities!

**\*An adult must be in the water with each child\***



**Passport Members - FREE!**  
**Non-Members - \$30 / child**

**Register at: [ujcvp.org](http://ujcvp.org)**

Questions? Email Sara: [straster@ujcvp.org](mailto:straster@ujcvp.org)



# Preschool Swim Class for ages 3-5

*\*children must be able to sit on the side of the pool deck during instruction time\**

**Fri. June 24**

**Fri. July 1**

**Fri. July 8**

**Fri. July 15**

**Fri. July 22**

**CLASS 1 - 5:30-6pm**

**CLASS 2 - 6-6:30pm**

**Register at: [ujcvp.org](http://ujcvp.org)**  
(space is limited)

**Passport Members - FREE**  
**Non-Members - \$40/child**

Questions? Email Sara: [straster@ujcvp.org](mailto:straster@ujcvp.org)

# NOW SHOWING

## Mel Brooks Birthday Film Fest

June  
9th  
7:00pm

*The History  
of the World*  
Popcorn & Cupcakes

June 16th, 7:00pm  
*Blazing Saddles*  
Popcorn & Cupcakes

June 23rd, 12:30pm\*  
*Young Frankenstein*  
\*Lunch will be served

June 30th, 7:00pm  
*Robin Hood: Men inTights*  
Popcorn & Cupcakes

PASSPORT MEMBERS - FREE  
NON-MEMBERS- \$10 / PERSON  
UJCV.P.ORG to RSVP



MEL BROOKS



**Lifelong Learning  
Summer Semester:**  
*Personal Discoveries of the  
Holocaust Through  
Genealogy*  
with instructor Steve Marks

June 6-8, 11am-12:15pm

Upon discovering old family photos, Steve Marks began a great adventure attempting to identify the subjects & translating the Yiddish & Polish documents. He discovered a monumental understanding of his European ancestry, including powerful & previously unknown revelations about the family's involvement with the Holocaust.

To register:  
[lifelonglearning.cnu.edu](http://lifelonglearning.cnu.edu)

## Lunch & Learn Field Trip to the Chrysler Museum

*The Guiding Hand: The Barr Foundation Collection of Torah Pointers*

Wednesday, June 8th

The bus will be  
leaving the J at 9:30am  
and returning at 2pm

Questions? Email  
[jmalkin@ujcvp.org](mailto:jmalkin@ujcvp.org)



Bag lunch will be  
provided.

Passport Members: Free  
Non-Members: \$15/per.

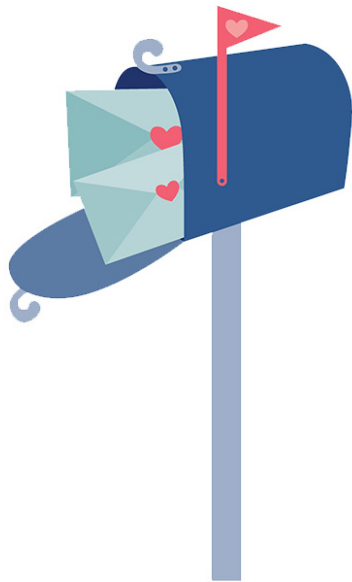
Register at: [ujcvp.org](http://ujcvp.org)

# Handle with Care

Will your child be away at camp this summer?

Let Jessi Malkin know. She would love to send your child some snail mail while they're away!

Email: [jmalkin@ujcvp.org](mailto:jmalkin@ujcvp.org)






# Keshet

קשת

For LGBTQ equality in Jewish life

## LGBTQ Jewish History Timeline with EJ Erichson Tench



Wednesday, June 22nd @ 7pm

This workshop will use an interactive timeline activity to explore key moments in LGBTQ Jewish history in the United States and will explore the implications of this history for our work on LGBTQ equality and belonging in Jewish life today.

Passport Members - FREE  
 Non-Members - \$10 / person  
 RSVP at [ujcvp.org](http://ujcvp.org)  
 Questions? Email [jmalkin@ujcvp.org](mailto:jmalkin@ujcvp.org)

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## Mikveh Questions

by Mikveh Guide, Sarah Barnett

How does the Rising Tide Open Mikveh movement intersect with other movement-centered Jewish organizations? What is the color of water? What is the color of G-d? How can the Rising Tide Network help its member communities? How much does a mikveh cost? How do you educate children about immersions? How do you approach your naysayer community members knowing that their minds may not, and do not have to, change?...

These questions and so much more were answered at the Rising Tide virtual conference held on May 9 and 10, 2022. From mikveh and immersion nuts and bolts, to fundraising, to spiritual exploration, the Rising Tide Mikveh conference had it all! The goal of the conference was to “connect, create, and cross pollinate” following the Torah dictate and theme of this year’s conference, *Naaseh V’Nishmah: We Will Do and We Will Hear*, as the Israelites responded to G-d at Mount Sinai regarding the adherence to the covenant and commandments.

Three of us from the UJCVP Mikveh committee (Meryl Kessler, Steve Shapiro, and myself) who attended this two day virtual gathering responded with enthusiasm to the theme and content. There were notes taken, discussions had, and lots of food for thought. Learning and inspiration went hand in hand.

I had the honor of facilitating a group “huddle,” a cohort

meeting of people from mikveh-aspiring communities. All of us have stories that are the same and different. All of us are in different places on our journey to build an open, kosher, mikveh. Inspiration came from virtually holding the hands of our cohort members from California, Arizona, England, South Africa, Minnesota and more. In our huddle we were given

the space to kvetch and to kvell. Challenged by our kvetches (complaints) we were more bolstered by our kvells (positives). Most of us kvelled about the people we are reaching who are inspired by our quest and have responded to our outreach and education.

Here at the UJCVP, we have much to kvell about, considering our community of support and willingness of leadership

to keep a bold, contemporary, revitalized ancient ritual and idea on the communal table. We recognize that there is much work to be done but we are inspired by our new found friends across the globe. We are inspired by the support in our own community and the support of the Rising Tide Open Mikveh Network. There were several huddle attendees who were dismayed by their feelings of loneliness in their quest. We are so fortunate to have a community of listeners who embrace the possibilities and the notion of learning.

If you are interested in learning more about the open mikveh movement, immersions, or our community mikveh project, committee members are always happy to connect!



Our UJCVP is a member of the consortium RISING TIDE, a national network devoted to opening the Mikveh Experience to the entire Jewish Community.

For more information, or with any questions, please contact Steve Shapiro,  
UJC Mikveh Chairman: [sshapiro@hampton.gov](mailto:sshapiro@hampton.gov)

## Congregation Adath Jeshurun

401 City Center Blvd. , Newport News, VA 23606

Telephone # 757-930-0820 | Website: [www.ajshul.com](http://www.ajshul.com)

Rabbi Gershon Litt, 757-559-1836



Our actions have cosmic implications. The small acts of kindness we engage in can make the biggest difference, not only to ourselves but to all of humanity.

### **Shabbos Candle Lighting Times:**

June 3 - 8:02pm, June 4 - 9:07pm (Shavuos)

June 5 - 9:07pm (Shavuos), June 10 - 8:06pm

June 17 - 8:09pm, June 24 - 8:10pm

### **Rabbi Litt's Shabbos Schedule:**

July 1-2, August 5-6, September 2-3

The Torah is not yet complete. It is a work in progress because we continue to write it through our actions. There is the Book of Ruth and a Scroll of Esther and new stories being written everyday that record our acts and the ways they have changed the world, even without us knowing.

We can become the heroes of tomorrow about whom the next book is written through even the most minute mitzvot. You never know which small deed you do that can have cosmic implications.



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## **In-Person & Zoom Services**

Minyan:

Mondays & Thursdays @ 7:45am

Kabbalat Shabbat: Fridays @ 6:00pm

## **In-Person Shabbat Morning Services & Zoom**

Saturdays @ 9:30am

Contact the office for Zoom information: [office@rodefsholomtemple.org](mailto:office@rodefsholomtemple.org)

401 City Center Blvd. - Newport News, VA, 23606 - 757-826-5894 - [rodefsholomtemple.org](http://rodefsholomtemple.org)

## TBEW Shavuot Program — June 4



Shavuot – the holiday that commemorates the Israelites receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai – starts this year on the evening of Saturday, June 4.

Join TBEW's Tikkun Leil Shavuot – nighttime study session – starting at 7:30 pm. Participate in person – in the synagogue Sanctuary – or online, via Zoom.

The program will consist of 10–20 minute study blocks, with Rabbi David and different members of the congregation teaching about their favorite Jewish texts.

Contact [office@tbewilliamsburg.org](mailto:office@tbewilliamsburg.org) for the link.



*We celebrate Jewish life all year!*

*Learn more at [tbewilliamsburg.org](http://tbewilliamsburg.org)*

Temple Sinai  
11620 Warwick Blvd, Newport News, VA 23601  
(757) 596-8352



### **WORSHIP SERVICES**

**Saturday, June 4th @ 10:00am** - Shabbat / Shavuot Service & Presentation on Decalogue by Judy Kline followed by light Kiddush luncheon

**Friday, June 10th @ 7:30pm** - Kabbalat Shabbat Service

**Friday, June 17th @ 7:30pm** - Kabbalat Shabbat Service

**Saturday, June 25th @ 10:00am** - Shabbat Service followed by light Kiddush luncheon

Contact Rabbi Sokol at [rabbiseverine@gmail.com](mailto:rabbiseverine@gmail.com) or (314) 628-9196 if you are interested in attending services.



# Dubai's New Tribe: What's it Like Being Jewish in the United Arab Emirates?

by Zoe Strimpel

Until very recently, Jews kept their heads down in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Fifteen years ago, I flew to Abu Dhabi to see a friend who had just relocated there for work. I made sure to bring my US passport, Israeli stamp-free.



I had mixed feelings about the trip: boiling sun in March sounded good and I was keen to see the garish wealth and bottomless brunches of lore. But like most Arab countries, the UAE didn't recognise Israel

and had a tradition of enshrining antisemitism — a scheme in which the Western institutions based out there were apparently happily complicit. In deference to local laws, British universities banned all books by Jews, and those that mentioned Jews in their bibliographies; the British Council openly admitted to the banning of Jewish work.

Flash forward to 2019, and a curious sea change not just in policy but apparently in sentiment towards Jews too. The UAE's "ministry of tolerance" suddenly decreed a new era of multi-faith harmony, in which Jews — since 1971, the year of the UAE's founding, an unofficially tolerated community — would be openly embraced. This was great but could have simply promoted lip service to toleration, especially for economic or political gain, not the full-throated embrace that followed the 2019 announcement.

And then, in 2020, came the most surprising development of all: the signing of the Abraham Accords which saw relations between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain "normalised" and made "friendly." Etihad began direct flights between Israel and Abu Dhabi (Emirates is set to start flying to Tel Aviv in June); Emirati investment in Israeli expertise and products, such as in water purification technology, was immediate, helped along by such outfits as the UAE Israel Business Council. Emirati investors bought shares in Hapoel Jerusalem and low-cost airline Israir. In 2020 and 2021, there was the massive menorah celebrating Chanukah in front of the Burj Al-Khalifa, the world's tallest building. The launch of Abu Dhabi's Abrahamic Family House will see the opening of the Moses Ben Maimon synagogue, reported to be the world's most opulent.

It was at this point that I decided to go out and take the temperature of the Jewish community myself. Had it really become the confident, relaxed and growing mini-minority Twitter was suggesting? Or was it part of a "faithwashing" process — to make the UAE, with its dubious human rights record, seem better than it is? I had another reason for going. As the epicentre of famed Emirati excess as well as the influencer economy, Dubai also seemed like somewhere worth going in its own right, if only once to observe its grandiose touristic delights and oil-fuelled luxuries alongside the textures of the burgeoning Jewish community. The much-stereotyped allure is now attracting Israelis by the plentiful too.

I landed in Dubai during Purim. I was due at a Purim party that night, organised by the Jewish Community of Dubai, which hosts weekly events and celebrations plus a Shabbat dinner for locals and tourists.

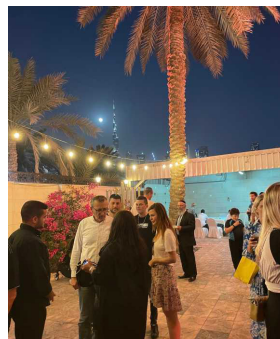
But first, I checked into Dubai's most expensive hotel, the sail-shaped Burj Al Arab. My split-level suite was enormous, airy and echoing, with floor-to-ceiling windows over the sea and city, a vast mirror over the bed, and a cavernous bathroom with a jacuzzi tub fillable by an on-demand butler. It was Dubai-extra. After my nap I ambled to Sal for lunch, a pretty terrace with an Ibiza vibe fronting the longest infinity pool I've ever seen, spilling into the electric blue sea.



Any Jew who visits Dubai will negotiate the outrageous, playful artificiality of the skyscraper-lined strip and its hubristic hotels, even if just on their way to 31st street, the site of

the spacious Jewish community house. After a costly 25-minute drive in a Mercedes helmed by an Indian man, I found myself, at dusk, on a quiet street bursting with bright pink flowers, and completely different in feel from everywhere else I would see in Dubai. I saw a doorway thronged with balloons and a security guard. This was clearly not the sad, three-person affair I feared it might be.

I entered a large, smart garden already full of hundreds of people, grownups and children, many dressed for Purim in humorous outfits, including, in one case, a man in full Emirati gear.



There were huge platters of kosher hot dogs, noodles, meat, bread and plates full of home-made hamantaschen. Later, a lamb schwarma began to rotate next to a vast tray of pita breads. I immediately met long-term Dubai resident, Bruce, a money manager originally from the US. Bruce, who had lived in the Emirate for over a decade, was the first of many I spoke to who swore blind that

Dubai had always been a welcoming place for Jews and that he had never encountered even the faintest whiff of antisemitism.

I soon found Adaya, a young Israeli woman who had recently relocated with her boyfriend and was now working as the community's liaison while finding her feet. She and her boyfriend had got tired of Israel's grindingly high taxes and Tel Aviv rental prices. They were ready for some tax-free fun in the sun, an identical refrain to that of the glamorous Russian-born Olga and her husband, whom I would meet at Shabbat the next night; they had also moved to Dubai from Tel Aviv to run a complex-sounding financial business.

There are several strands to the UAE's community: the Jewish Council, the Jewish Community Center and Chabad. The chief rabbi is Yehuda Sarna, based in New York; Ross Kriel is the South African-born president of the Jewish Council of the Emirates, and Levi Duchman is the rabbi of the JCC and Chief Rabbi of Chabad; he is the UAE's only resident rabbi. Duchman, formerly of New York, was the rabbi presiding over the hundreds of revellers I saw. In the end, Duchman was so busy and with such an unpredictable schedule that despite chasing him for weeks, by email, through representatives, and then finally in person, I was unable to finally catch him. He was supposed to be at the Purim party, but at the last minute found he would need to stay all night in Abu Dhabi, where the community was getting on its feet.

I did meet his little brother Mendel, a handsome 25-year-old rabbi running the shop when Levi is away, who told me that the UAE is "the best place for Jews to live in the world." By contrast, he said that while in New York, wearing religious clothing, he constantly felt threatened and encountered regular street antisemitism. I met his wife, Mucha, a French-born banker with enormous blue eyes, and the Duchman sister, Chevi, the linchpin of the House; she oversees the running of the Chabad-JCC house, complete with a suite of Filipino cooks and security. It was Chevi who had made the hamantaschen for Purim.

With a whiskey in one hand and a hot dog in the other, I was introduced to Solly Wolf, the head of the JCC. He is a charming, elderly gentleman with a persistent Hebrew accent who has lived in the Emirates for 20 years, working in textiles and as a couturier. He told me that because he dressed their wives, he had long known the UAE's seven Sheiks. He said that while he'd never encountered antisemitism throughout his two decades in Dubai, he also never let on that he was Israeli. On hearing this I suspected the picture of rosy acceptance painted by Bruce and others was a little over-the-top. But then I met several men who said they went out to cafes in Dubai wearing their kippot only ever attracting admiring curiosity.



The community consists of 400-odd families living permanently in the UAE now sending their children to nursery and even an after-school Talmud Torah programme, plus hundreds more passing through on business or pleasure. Other locals I met on Purim included Esther Faustino, the Italian head of merchandising in the Middle East for Max Mara who had worked in Milan before moving to Dubai, and Avital Schneller, the only Jewish employee of the Abu Dhabi tourism board.

Red-cheeked and merry after an evening of friendly conviviality, I dove back into the other Dubai, the one of the Burj al-Arab and its flagship Italian restaurant, notable for the vast aquarium that runs around it. The next day I was taken to the brand-new Museum of the Future, more impressive for its exorbitantly spacious design than its somewhat half-baked futurism, and then

to the artists' colony Al Serkal, a cluster of elegant coffee shops, cafes, boutiques and even a cinema showing films on normally censored themes such as same-sex romance.

A quick dip back at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel and I was ready to go back to 31st Street for Shabbat dinner. I arrived at dusk, just before Shabbat came in. It was quiet, almost deserted this time, and the door was locked: after buzzing, a guard let me in. A table outside was set for 35 and by the end of the evening it was full, with about half of the guests sleeping over in one of many rooms on-site. I wandered into the house and encountered a fascinating trickle of guests. There was the young woman from Ukraine, a 21-year-old model dating an Israeli who had lived in Kiev. She seemed grimly determined to wait the war out and return home when it was safe. There were the just-married Israeli pair who had relocated for business.

There was Jasmin, a glamorous French woman who ran Dolce Vita, a "conciergerie" for Jews in Dubai organising kosher outings and events. Kosher food is surprisingly accessible in the Emirates: there are three kosher eateries in Dubai as well as Kosher Arabia, which provides kosher catering to airlines — I met a South African man who worked for Kosher Arabia, and he wore dreadlocks and linens, further exploding my existing image of Dubai expats.

The men davened before dinner; I asked if there was a shul on site. There isn't, because at the moment synagogues can only be granted a license in hotels — which nobody much wants — and residential permits for shuls were recently revoked. This sounded like a wrinkle in the great embrace, but I was assured they were just figuring things out. Still, one person put in that "everything was about money," referring to the permits.

Over dinner I met the dozens in town for the Nas Daly conference on digital content; this crop included a couple of young men from Yeshiva University in New York, one of whom serenaded the Shabbat table with improvised R&B lyrics, and Nataniel Gouracki, a handsome Frenchman living in Jaffa and the founder of That's Y, an activist news agency. It was a Shabbat evening of more than average convivial familiarity, and I felt thoroughly at home.

The next day was my last in the Emirate: I went on a whistlestop tour of the small old town and aromatic, orderly spice market, and then off into the desert for sunset with a group called Heritage Safaris. As I rode a camel called Jamal, I reflected on how Dubai's storied but fundamentally alien culture, with all its luxuries, had become the surprising setting for what had seemed one of the happiest and healthiest Jewish communities I had ever encountered. I hankered to return — to the house at 31st street.



**Article can be found at: <https://www.thejc.com/life-and-culture/all/dubais-new-tribe-whats-it-like-being-jewish-in-the-united-arab-emirates-5MkeNhKl5wEBuizcqmk5gl>**



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# UJCVP Community June 2022 Calendar

**Wednesday, June 1, 2022**

1-4pm - Glendale Pool

**Thursday, June 2, 2022**

10:45am - Grand Club/Bingo

**Friday, June 3, 2022**

4-9pm - Glendale Pool

**Saturday, June 4, 2022**

11am-9pm - Glendale Pool

**Sunday, June 5, 2022**

1-8pm - Glendale Pool

**Monday, June 6, 2022**

UJC CLOSED  
SARFAN CENTER CLOSED  
11am - Lifelong Learning

**Tuesday, June 7, 2022**

10am - Red Cross Blood Drive  
11am - Lifelong Learning  
7pm - Pickleball

**Wednesday, June 8, 2022**

9:30am - L&L Field Trip  
11am - Lifelong Learning  
1-4pm - Glendale Pool

**Thursday, June 9, 2022**

10:45am - Grand Club/Bingo  
3-5pm - JCraft Pick Up  
7pm - Mel Brooks Film Fest: *The History of the World, Part 1*

**Friday, June 10, 2022**

4-9pm - Glendale Pool

**Saturday, June 11, 2022**

11am-9pm - Glendale Pool

**Sunday, June 12, 2022**

11:30am - UJC Annual Meeting  
1pm - PJ Library Petting Zoo  
Story Time  
1-8pm - Glendale Pool

**Tuesday, June 14, 2022**

7pm - Pickleball

**Wednesday, June 15, 2022**

1-4pm - Glendale Pool

**Thursday, June 16, 2022**

10:45am - Grand Club/Bingo  
7pm - Mel Brooks Film Fest: *Blazing Saddles*

**Friday, June 17, 2022**

4-9pm - Glendale Pool

**Saturday, June 18, 2022**

11am-9pm - Glendale Pool  
8pm - Moonlight Swim

**Sunday, June 19, 2022**

11am - Camp Chaverim Meet & Greet / Design Your Camp Shirt  
1-8pm - Glendale Pool

**Monday, June 20, 2022**

SARFAN CENTER CLOSED  
1-8pm - Glendale Pool

**Tuesday, June 21, 2022**

SARFAN CENTER CLOSED  
11am-4pm - Glendale Pool  
7pm - Pickleball

**Wednesday, June 22, 2022**

SARFAN CENTER CLOSED  
11am-8pm - Glendale Pool  
7pm - LGBTQ Jewish History  
Timeline

**Thursday, June 23, 2022**

SARFAN CENTER CLOSED  
10:45am - Grand Club/Bingo  
11am-8pm - Glendale Pool  
11:30am - Blood Pressure Clinic  
12:30pm - Mel Brooks Film Fest: *Young Frankenstein*  
5:30pm - Parent/Child Swim  
Class

**Friday, June 24, 2022**

SARFAN CENTER CLOSED  
11am - 9pm - Glendale Pool  
5:30pm - Preschool Swim Class  
6pm - Preschool Swim Class

**Saturday, June 25, 2022**

11am-9pm - Glendale Pool

**Sunday, June 26, 2022**

1-8pm - Glendale Pool  
5pm - Bon Voyage: Steve  
Wendell's Retirement Party

**Monday, June 27, 2022**

First Day of Camp Chaverim  
1-8pm - Glendale Pool

**Tuesday, June 28, 2022**

11am-8pm - Glendale Pool  
7pm - Pickleball

**Wednesday, June 29, 2022**

11am-8pm - Glendale Pool

**Thursday, June 30, 2022**

Raise Your Hand Day  
10:45am - Grand Club/Bingo  
11am-8pm - Glendale Pool  
5:30pm - Parent/Child Swim  
Class  
7pm - Mel Brooks Film Fest: *Robin Hood Men in Tights*