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Hamilton Jewish

News

KISLEV 5780

The voice of Jewish Hamilton Dec 2019

AGENCY NAME CHANGE REFLECTS BROAD SOCIAL MANDATE

After 90 years, Jewish Social Services adopts a new name

STORY BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

ONE OF THE Hamilton Jewish community's longest-serving social service agencies is changing its name to better reflect its mission. Hamilton Jewish Social Services, founded in 1929 at the height of the Depression, will now be known as Hamilton Jewish Family Services (JFS). JFS president, Susan Roth said the new name "reflects the reality of our agency's commitment to helping individuals and families as they navigate through life's challenges. As Hamilton Jewish Family Services, we are proudly aligning our agency with other Jewish family service agencies internationally that share our name and spirit." JFS executive director Alexis Wenzowski made the announcement about the agency's new name at its open house held at JHamilton on Nov. 14. "With our new name, we are capturing the rich history of supportive care that Jewish Social Services represented, and beginning to write a new story of support within Jewish Hamilton," she told the HJN.

NAME CHANGE CONTINUES ON P4



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, THE HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Jewish Family Services executive director Alexis Wenzowski and president Susan Roth presented the agency's new logo and set of values at the agency's open house on Nov. 14.



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Sam Hansell, 15, received special acknowledgement from Holocaust survivor Vera Barany during an evening of personal sharing at JHamilton in November. Story on page 5.

THE POWER OF SHARING PERSONAL STORIES

Holocaust Education Week program a moving evening of personal testimony

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OUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE. I WANT YOU TO PANIC.

BY DAVE CARSON

OUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE. I want you to panic!

These are the words of young Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg to The United Nations.

Is our house on fire? Yes, the planet is warming up at an alarming rate and human activity is the cause. Are we panicking? Only a few people are. Mostly it is business as usual, even for governments that profess to be fighting climate change.

Why is this so? Several reasons are apparent. First, there has been a multi-decade campaign of misinformation and cover-up by the fossil fuel industry. Recent exposure of their internal documents show that their scientists warned industry leaders back in the 1970s that burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas) was leading the planet to dangerous levels of CO2 emissions with dread-



We defer or deny the need for action because it changes our way of life.

DAVE CARSON

ful consequences. But they chose short term profits over long term harm to civilization, with the consequence that it is now too late to avoid the oncoming climate chaos.

A second reason, built on the first, is that the implications for our current fossil fueled economy and way of life are so great that politicians do not want to confront them. They know what to do, but they think they won't get elected if they do it. Some politicians are even doubling down by denying human causes of climate change or opposing obvious solutions, such as taxing carbon.

This comes to the third reason. Because of weak leadership and the fossil fuel industry cover-up, most of us have not taken to heart the seriousness of climate change. This is a future of increasing extremes of weather causing drought, floods, forest fires, insect-borne disease, of sea level rise and acidification all of which will drive food and water scarcity, human dislocation, refugee flows and overall economic and social disruption. The poorest and weakest will be harmed first, and most, but no one, however rich, will eventually be able to insulate themselves from the consequences.


A fourth reason is human nature. We respond to immediate threats but not distant ones. Not that threat is distant for those who have already suffered from some of the worst hurricanes or extremes of heat. But mostly the impacts are in the future. We defer or deny the need for action because it changes our way of life. Of course, for some, the poorest and weakest, usually the ones who are only minimally polluting anyway, their lives are already on a knife edge and there is little they can do to further reduce their fossil fuel emissions.

This leads to the moral question. If my actions are causing others to suffer today and even more tomorrow, should I not change my behaviour? Knowing the consequences of doing nothing, should I not set an example to others by making big changes in my life? Just because I am one of the lucky 10 per cent in the developed world who will be the last to suffer, should I avoid action today?

My answer is no. Everyone should act. They should educate themselves on the causes of human-created climate change and what actions our economy and society have to take to minimize the damage (it's too late to avoid a lot, but we can stop it from getting worse).





It will take a lot of change in our personal lives, our laws, our regulations and taxes to drive the changes in consumer behaviour that are necessary. Don't let special interests—and there are many—block the needed changes. Push at every level, your family, friends and local community, your faith group, your clubs, your work, local and national politicians, to make the needed changes. And stop pouring fuel on our house fire!

Dave Carson is a resident of Dundas, and a member of Environment Hamilton and climate advocacy group Hamilton 350.







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PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

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PHOTO BY SIMON MENDELSON

ESSAY CONTEST WINNER

Congratulations to Emet Mendelson, 14, a Grade 9 student at Westmount Secondary School, for winning \$100 for his submission to the Hamilton Jewish News essay contest. Emet's beautifully-written essay on his family will be published in the February 2020 edition of the HJN. Pictured left are Emet with HJN editor Wendy Schneider.

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COMING UP

FEBRUARY ISSUE

- Deadline for booking ad space
Jan. 15, 2020
- Deadline for receiving editorial copy
Jan. 23, 2020
- Deadline for receiving ad copy
Feb. 4, 2020
- Estimated date of arrival
Feb. 26, 2020

HJN

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The Hamilton Jewish News is published four times a year by Hamilton Jewish News Inc. and funded by the Hamilton Jewish Federation

CIRCULATION 2,000

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Hamilton Jewish News invites members of the community to contribute letters, articles or guest editorials. Written submissions must be forwarded by the deadline indicated in each issue. This newspaper reserves the right to edit, condense or reject any contribution for brevity or legal purposes.

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It's a way to get engaged with Judaism in a way you don't at synagogue or at a JCC." **BENSON HONIG** Hamilton Jewish Film Festival committee member

NAME CHANGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

The rebranding also reflects a broadening range and reach of programs and services that reflect the diversity of challenges individuals face in life. In addition to poverty relief, programs include career counselling, support programs for caregivers and those suffering from chronic pain or mental health issues.

Jewish poverty in Canada is on the rise and Hamilton is no exception. Incoming JFS president Hanna Schayer told that HJN that the agency will continue to have poverty reduction as a primary focus.

"When people come into the agency, we're going to make sure that they know about every possible opportunity available to them, through the federal government or through other agencies, whether it's retraining or introducing them to all the programs available, including those that will help them get out of poverty," she said.

Approximately 70 families currently rely on JFS's Kosher food bank, according to Wenzowski, while up to 35 individuals rely on monthly financial aid. "This assistance helps many low-income individuals keep their head above water," she said.

Hamilton Jewish Family Services's new logo depicting a pair of hands enveloping two figures in the shape of the Hebrew words "chai" is meant to represent the support the agency gives people as they journey through life.

"We envision JFS as a place that supports people when they most need it, and creates hopeful opportunities for community engagement. We work with a large unaffiliated population who come to us because they are Jewish and need help. Often JFS is their only relationship with the Hamilton Jewish community," said Wenzowski. "We are here to guide, assist, and support everyone throughout their journey." For more information about JFS programs, see page 15.



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

A NEW JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

BY **ABIGAIL CUKIER**
THE HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

2020 MARKS the inaugural year of the Hamilton Jewish Film Festival, a partnership with the recently renovated Westdale Theatre.

When Fred Fuchs, an independent film and television producer, moved to Dundas five years ago, he was disappointed there was no independent movie theatre. When The Westdale was put up for sale in 2017, a group of volunteers formed a non-profit organization and raised money to buy the 1935 theatre. A \$2.5-million renovation of the heritage-designated building included art deco restoration, new sound and projection technology and new seats and acoustic paneling. The renovation also included adding accessible seating and a stage.

"We wanted show the best independent and art house films. But the vision always was to also be a community hub. We wanted to work with other charitable organizations, offering charitable rates with a great venue, and work with these people to make things happen," said Fuchs, noting the theatre is also a great place to hold panel discussions, talks and other events.

Fuchs reached out to members of Beth Jacob Synagogue's Israeli Film Festival committee that same year to see if they'd be

interested in a future partnership with The Westdale. The opportunity to expand their mandate and show films in a theatrical setting seemed too good to pass up, and, after consulting with both Beth Jacob Synagogue and the Hamilton Jewish Federation, the committee decided to recreate itself as a Jewish Film Festival committee under the auspices of Federation.

"It's definitely a move up for us," said Benson Honig, a member of the original Beth Jacob Israeli Film Festival committee. "This is the first time the festival will be at a venue, a beautiful venue with a giant, full screen. I am really excited. I know it's going to be a success."

The Hamilton Jewish Film Festival will run March 21-22, 2020 at The Westdale, 1014 King St. W. and feature films from around the world.

Honig says the festival is an opportunity to share Jewish culture with the broader community. "It's a way to get engaged with Judaism in a way you don't at synagogue or at a JCC," he said. "You can look at our culture globally and see the wrinkles and different facets of the culture worldwide and see how it affects us and how we affect it."

Details about the Hamilton Jewish Film Festival lineup will be available shortly at jewishhamilton.org or at thewestdale.ca.



HAMILTON CHANUKAH HAPPENINGS

TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM

- **YOFI Chanukah** Dec. 6 at 5:15pm. Stories, songs and crafts with Rabbi Cohen, Cantor Baruch and friends
- **Latke Making Party** Dec. 15 at 10 a.m. in the Frank kitchen. Peel, grate, mix and fry with friends.
- **Chanukah Shabbat Live** Dec. 20 at 6:15pm. Kick off Chanukah with lively music and soul. The TAS Choir and professional musicians are ready to help you celebrate.
- **Chanukah Community Dinner** Dec. 20 at 7:30 p.m. \$40 per adult; \$20 per child and family deal at \$100. Call 905-528-0121 to book.

BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE

Beth Jacob Community Chanukah Dinner and Torah Celebration
Sunday Dec. 22 at 4:30 p.m.
Children's activities followed by Chanukah lighting (bring your own!) and a festive fleishig buffet. Adults \$25; discounts for youth and families. RSVP before Dec. 16 at shira@bethjacobsynagogue.ca or call (905) 522 1351 ex. 10.

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Wednesday, Dec. 18 at 6 p.m.
Community Chanukah Dinner

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Sunday, Dec. 22 at 4:30 p.m.
Community Menorah lighting in Gore Park

The lawyers and staff at Ross & McBride LLP wish the entire community a happy and healthy Hanukkah.

Happy Hanukkah.



Jeffrey Manishen

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Lawyers in your Corner

People said that being able to ask questions of survivors shed light on their understanding of the Holocaust and antisemitism. **ROBIN ZILBERG** Holocaust Education Committee

AN EVENING OF PERSONAL SHARING

More than 100 come out to hear Holocaust survivors share their stories

BY **ROBIN ZILBERG**
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

WHEN I JOINED Hamilton Jewish Federation's Holocaust Education Committee, I wasn't really sure what I was getting myself into, though volunteering is an integral aspect of my life and certainly feeds my soul. I had volunteered with the committee at its annual student seminar on the Holocaust at Mohawk College, so I was aware that work was part of the deal. Our committee was tasked with creating Holocaust Education Week programming for the Jewish community and public in early November. When I suggested that we adapt a format the YWCA had used in a storytelling event where I was a participant, they embraced the concept. We were able to gather a group of five courageous women, all Holocaust survivors, who were willing to share their stories and experiences. We would use a small group format in order to create an intimate interactive experience.

"An evening of Personal Stories," presented by the Hamilton Jewish Federation and Margaret's Legacy took place on Nov. 5 at JHamilton. Our storytellers were Vera Barany, Sonia Ger, Diana Gutwein, Nadia Rosa and Anna Schafer.

We had told the survivors to anticipate approximately five to 10 participants at each table. To my delight and amazement, approximately 100 people came through the doors! As groups of 20 gathered around each table, our speakers took it all in stride as they rotated among the five stations every 20 minutes to tell their stories again and answer questions. As I circulated, I was struck by the interactions and intensity with which everyone listened to the



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, THE HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, THE HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Above: Community members listen intently as Diana Gutwein recounts her experiences during the Holocaust.

Left: Four generations of Sonia Ger's family were in attendance, including her daughter Anita Bernstein, granddaughter Naomi Bernstein and grandson, Asher Bernstein-Dressler.

stories.

The feedback I received was really interesting. People said that even though they knew the history, being able to ask questions of survivors shed new light on their understanding of the Holocaust and antisemitism.

The general feedback was a big thumbs-up and many people asked about future events.

I was delighted to see so that so many people from outside the Jewish community were interested in hearing the stories of these brave survivors.

The evening was a spectacular success, and would not have been possible without the enormous support of Hamilton Jewish

Federation CEO Gustavo Rymberg and Elaine Levine. Thank you to the many volunteers and staff who helped out the evening of the event. A special thank you to Liam Graham for filming and documenting the event.

It is our hope that this approach will encourage a wider audience to attend future events, and educating people about the Holocaust and racism will remind people of our common humanity.

Robin Zilberg is an artist, public speaker, and the author of *Borderline Me*.

AN AUDIENCE MEMBER REACTS

BY **EMILY BAKER**

AS I ENTER my 30s, I am in a process of self-discovery, exploring my history, my roots, where my family came from, and my identity as a young Jewish woman. My grandparents are no longer here to answer my many questions. I have been lost, until now.

I had the absolute honour of being invited to "An Evening of Personal Stories," hosted by the Hamilton Jewish Federation at JHamilton. Five incredible women shared their personal stories of living through the Holocaust.

When I walked in, I felt like I was home. Finally, I felt accepted and that I belonged. We all gathered around tables, eagerly introduced ourselves, and the stories began.

The five women are the strongest women I have ever met. Their stories were sad, yet beautiful; heartbreaking, yet wonderful. To hear their experiences of tragedy and survival was remarkable. They all spoke so eloquently, telling their stories and their truth, answering every question we had, and feeling safe to do so. While speakers went through different experiences and came from different family backgrounds, the one thing they had in common was that they survived the Holocaust as young, brave, and proud Jewish women.

I took in every word and left the event humbled and proud to have learned so much about who I am and where I come from, from each of the five speakers. They are all incredible for living through and surviving such a significant piece of Jewish history. They are survivors.

Though my journey of self exploration has just begun, this was an opportunity I will never forget, that I feel blessed to have been a part of, and that has helped me tap into "who I am" on an extraordinary level.

Emily Baker lives in Hamilton.

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Author Kathy Kacer presents her book "Shanghai Escape" and other stories of the Holocaust.



An Evening of Personal Stories with Holocaust Survivors Diana Gutwein, Nadia Rosa, Vera Barany, Anna Schafer and Sonia Ger.

HEW | 2019

Holocaust Education Week



Leslie Mezel, author of "A Tapestry of Survival" was interviewed by the Azrieli Foundation.



Kristallnacht Community Commemoration | Canadian Premiere: "Warsaw: A City Divided" | Keynote Speaker: Dr. Pamela Swett

As a granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, I've always discussed the reasons to be proud of our heritage. But this very pride is what now burdens our children. **BRENDA BURJAW** Parent

HAMILTON'S JEWISH TEENS GRAPPLE WITH ANTISEMITISM

Grassroots efforts aimed at addressing antisemitism in area schools

BY **ABIGAIL CUKIER**
THE HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

BRENDA BURJAW says that a few days after seeing the antisemitic graffiti in the parking lot of Beth Jacob Synagogue on Oct. 5, her pre-teen started to feel anxious. She was having difficulty dealing with what she had seen, along with all of the hate she sees on social media and in the news directed at Jews around the world.

"Our pre-teens and teens are exposed to the world through social media platforms. There are limited controls for what they see and the constant stimuli of seeing reports of hate crimes, shootings and environmental destruction becomes overwhelming," said Burjaw.

"As parents, we do our best to talk. As a granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, I've always discussed our legacy and our need to remember the stories, the reasons to be proud of our heritage and culture. But this very pride is what now burdens our children. Are they safe to be proud? How can they be safe and proud of being Jewish at the same time?"

When Burjaw turned to a community Facebook group for guidance, other moms shared similar concerns—of wanting to instill Jewish pride in their children while making them aware of harsh realities.

Three weeks after the graffiti incident, Beth Jacob held a discussion for youth in grades six to 12 with Rabbi Chuck Diamond.

Diamond is a former rabbi of Pittsburgh's Or L'Simcha Congregation, located at the Tree of Life building where a gunman killed 11 people in October 2018. Since then, he has become a spokesperson for the community on various news programs and has



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

given his presentation, *When Thoughts and Prayers Aren't Enough*, to many communities, including Hamilton. He has also spent parts of the past 45 summers at Camp Ramah in Muskoka.

"This is part of their reality. They all go to schools where they are the only Jew, or among a handful of Jewish kids," said Rabbi Diamond of the Beth Jacob discussion participants. "They have experienced other kids saying things, when they might not even realize how hurtful they are being, for example, making fun of someone wearing a kippah."

During their discussion, Rabbi Diamond suggested to the youth that they do things as a group, including raising awareness but also just socializing. He recommended joining with kids from different backgrounds—to create a dialogue and to get to know each other and have fun.

"This would deepen connections and also make them feel they are doing something. They can feel good being together and feel like they are taking action and participating. They can be a voice for kids."

Burjaw agrees that Hamilton needs active youth groups.

"The gathering with Rabbi Chuck Diamond was a blessing. When I was a

Rabbi Chuck Diamond, former rabbi at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue, at a September 2019 presentation on the mass shooting and its aftermath at Beth Jacob.

pre-teen, his visits at Ramah made an impression on me. He always had the right words to make me feel loved and confident as a Jew. His recent experience with his community made him the perfect role model for our Beth Jacob kids. The event was an opportunity for our kids to see they are not alone. This was a great start to something, an opportunity to learn, build connections and be reassured."

And something is starting. Members of Beth Jacob's Yak and Snack group, a monthly drama group for Grades 1 to 4 and

discussion group for Grades 5 to 9 run by Anna and Denise Lilliman, have discussed initiatives including creating a pamphlet for public schools describing how antisemitism feels, increasing youth participation in synagogue services and possibly starting a youth minyan.

"We need to find ways to support our pre-teens. They need to feel a connection to the very fabric that helps to give reason for having pride in being Jewish," said Burjaw.

"I'd like to challenge other families with pre-teens to make being connected a priority. Attend the programs at your shul, participate in the programs at JHamilton, volunteer. Make your contribution to a Jewish lifestyle, whatever that means to you, a priority. Let's empower our kids to teach the world to Never Forget what happened and how it happened, to prevent the hate from growing."

The Hamilton Chapter wishes all our Donors, Families and Friends a Warm and Festive

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Highlights from the Marvin Caplan Jewish Book Festival



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Each night featured a different author recounting the essence of his or her book about an inspirational real-life hero or heroine. The emotion in the room during these presentations was palpable and all who attended felt enriched by the experience.

The week kicked off with a presentation by Jack Fairweather who spoke about his book "The Volunteer," the story of Polish resistance member Witold Pilecke, who voluntarily went to Auschwitz to report on Nazi atrocities. The second night featured Palestinian writer Yousef Bashir, whose book "The Words of My Father" documents his search for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Meg Waite Clayton was the next featured speaker, whose historical novel "The Last Train to London" tells the story of Truus Wijsmuller, a member of the Dutch resistance, who risks her life smuggling Jewish children out of Nazi Germany to the nations that will take them

The festival's closing event featured a riveting and powerful lecture by Rabbi Ariel Burger who discussed his professional and personal experiences with Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, recounted in his award-winning book "Witness: Lessons from the Elie Wiesel's Classroom." Especially moving was Rabbi Burger's account of his final meeting with Professor Wiesel, who confined to a wheelchair but still sharp as a tack, urged him to "Learn, learn, learn."

Leslie Selevan, Program Coordinator



“What was saddest to me is the fact that there are no Jews remaining in Den Bosch.”

JACKI LEVIN

DUTCH CITY POSTHUMOUSLY HONOURS JEWISH LEADER

Jacki Levin and her family unite with her Dutch family for a moving ceremony in honour of her grandfather

BY JACKIE LEVIN
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

BEFORE THE Second World War, 's-Hertogenbosch (Den Bosch), a city in the south of Holland had a population of 50,000 people, including 500 Jews. Among them were my grandparents, my mother and her eight siblings. They lived a rich Jewish life with an organized Jewish community and a shul.

Holland's Jewish population of 140,000 was severely decimated in the Shoah. France lost 25 per cent of its Jews, Belgium and Norway each lost 40 per cent, but at least 75 per cent of Holland's Jews were murdered by the Nazis, the third highest in Europe after Poland and Greece. Today, only about 35,000 Jews remain in all of Holland.

After Den Bosch's liberation, only 200 Jews returned to the city. Today, the population of Den Bosch has ballooned to 150,000 but there are no Jews living in the city. The city, however, has not forgotten its pre-war Jewish population. On Oct. 24, the city of Den Bosch celebrated 75 years of liberation from the Nazis by honouring my grandfather, the musician and composer Simon Spiero, who had been the leader of the Jewish community.

My husband Larry and I, as well as my brother Simon (named after our grandfather) and his wife Janice attended the Den Bosch ceremony. It was an emotional experience for us and for many of my

Dutch family who also attended.

Of our mother's family, both of our grandparents and seven of nine siblings survived the war. This is quite incredible when you look at how few Dutch Jews survived. Sadly however, my grandfather, who was diabetic, and who had retinal hemorrhages while in hiding, was unable to get medical attention. Although he completely lost his vision after the war, he continued composing and running his music shop. My mother, who was the oldest of the children, spent the war in hiding with her youngest sibling. That sister, Sophie, still alive at age 94, spoke at the ceremony.

It was a joyous, meaningful, emotional and yet sad experience. The ceremony at the 17th century City Hall was attended by about 100 people (20 of them family). As we entered the council chambers an orchestra in the balcony played pieces composed by my grandfather. Speakers at the ceremony told the history of Jews in Holland and recounted the essentials of the life of Simon Spiero, while projecting pictures of him and his family. My aunt Sophie (Tante Fiet) was interviewed about her experiences during hiding and of her recollections of the liberation. In between speakers, the orchestra played some of our grandfather's joyful marches.

As it happens, the day before the ceremony was the anniversary of my parents' wedding. They



Above: **Jacki and Larry Levin** (back row sixth and seventh from the left) joined their extended Dutch family at a ceremony in the city of Den Bosch organized in honour of her grandfather and 75 years of liberation from the Nazis.



Left: **Jacki Levin's grandfather**, Simon Spiero, in front of his music store. A composer and musician, Spiero was also the head of the Den Bosch Jewish community.

had been married in that very city hall on Oct. 23, 1945. My father, a Canadian soldier, and my mother, who worked for the Canadian army as a translator upon returning from hiding, were both in uniform. The mayor of Den Bosch took us to the wedding room where my parents had been married. It is a beautiful room with gold leather wallpaper. The room contained

the same wall coverings and chairs as it had when my parents married. In 1945, there were no rabbis and the *chuppa* had to wait until they both came to Canada after the war.

Why was it sad? Of course, I missed my parents and felt their presence in that building and in the streets of Den Bosch. But what was saddest to me is the fact that

there are no Jews remaining in Den Bosch, no shul (although it's been preserved as an event space for concerts and lectures) and no Jewish life.

The joy was in being together with our family, in hearing my grandfather's music and mostly in the fact that Den Bosch has not forgotten its Jewish history.



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Campaign 2020

Hamilton Jewish Community Centre

Children and Family Programs



BABYSITTING BASICS - (AGES 11-15)

This course provides new babysitters with the necessary skills to provide care to children in a variety of situations. Take home materials: babysitters manual, babysitting certificate and a small babysitting first aid kit.

April 5 | 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. | Fee: \$68

FURRY FAMILY FUN!

Have the post Chanukah blues got you down? Well let JHamilton lift your spirits with a morning of family fun! We are once again being visited by some very special little fuzzy friends! Featured alongside arts and crafts by the JCC and face painting by Glitterbug, this is sure to be an amazing event! Oh, and did we mention? Those fuzzy friends are BABY GOATS!

Jan. 12 | 10 a.m. - noon | Fee: \$5 per person

MAD SCIENCE - (AGES 6-11)

A program that is fun as it is educational. Mad Science offers a hands-on science program which covers different science topics including electricity, magnetism, optics, biology and more. This is the perfect break between school and homework!

Feb. 3 - April 6 (NO CLASS Feb. 17 (Family Day) or March 16 (Midwinter Break)

4:15 to 5:15 p.m. | Fee: \$106 + HST

Adult Programs

MARIJUANA: WEEDING OUT THE TRUTH FROM A MEDICAL AND HALACHIC PERSPECTIVE

With Dr. Ira Price MD, FRCPC and Rabbi Dr. Michael Schweitzer MD.

Thursday, Dec. 12 | 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Free Admission | Pre-Registration required by Dec. 10

AGEING TO SAGEING: 6 WEEK WORKSHOP

Please join us for a 6 week thought provoking workshop conducted by the award-winning broadcaster, Ralph Benmergui in a circle of confidentiality and grounded in Jewish learning to move from being passive seniors to engaged elders.

Jan. 16 - Feb. 20 | Thursdays 10:30 a.m. - noon

Cost: \$150.00 | Pre-Registration required by Jan. 20

SILK PAINTING: 4 WEEK WORKSHOP

Participants will complete an original challah cover or holiday-themed table runner in four sessions. Let your creativity come out - no previous experience required!"

Feb. 12 - March 4 | Wednesdays 7 - 9 p.m.

Cost: \$50 | Pre-Registration required by Jan. 20, 2020

PILATES WITH DEBBI STRUB: 6 WEEK WORKSHOP

Debbie will share the complexities of Pilates in a fun and easy-going atmosphere to help you move more efficiently. You will be amazed at the depth of the benefits that Pilates will have on your physical and mental health.

Jan. 6 - Feb. 20 | Pre-Registration by Jan. 3, 2020

Meet every Monday at 11 a.m. or at 7 p.m. for one hour

Cost: 6 sessions for \$75

CHOOSING WELLNESS: HOW TO MAKE POSITIVE LIFESTYLE CHANGES FOR GOOD HEALTH

Come Join registered holistic nutritionist Alisa Krieger for an insightful and intriguing evening focused on learning the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. In today's society obesity, and disease are rampant.

Wednesday, Feb. 5 from 7 - 8 p.m. | Free Admission

ARTWORKZ WITH SANDY GREENBLATT - (AGES 5+)

You are invited to a very special art class, tailored for the JCC!

We will be joined by the Dundas Valley School of Art's Sandy Greenblatt, who will run monthly art afternoons with a Judaic twist! Come and create something fabulous for Purim! Prepare for Pesach! Unleash your inner artist and see just how creative you can be! At the end of each class you will have a craft to take home and treasure.

Jan. 26 | Feb. 23 | March 22 | 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Fee: \$12 per class or \$30 for the series.

ENGINEERING FOR KIDS - ROBOTICS FOR KIDS - JUNIOR - (AGES 6+)

Stage 1 - Explore Robotics with LEGO WeDo

Let's make LEGO move! Combined with motors and sensors, children build interactive LEGO WeDo Robotics models every week under the guidance of instructors with an engineering background. After a total of 32 hours of building and learning, students will be taught the basics of sensors, block coding and simple machines.

Feb. 13 - May 14 (NO CLASS March 19 (Midwinter Break)

or April 16 (Passover)) | 4 - 5:30 p.m. | Fee: \$380

ENGINEERING FOR KIDS - ROBOTICS FOR KIDS - SENIOR - (AGES 9+)

Are you interested in Robotics? Our LEGO EV3 class provides an excellent platform to learn basic robotics that connects with real-world implementation. By the end of 12 weekly classes, students will learn the basics of controlling robot movement, line-following and various autonomous driving methods. Stick with the program and be in with a chance to compete in the LEGO League Competition!

Feb. 11 - May 12 (NO CLASS March 17 (Midwinter Break) or April 14 (Passover) |

4 to 5:30 p.m. | Fee: \$380 + HST

KADIMAH MIDWINTER & PASSOVER CAMPS

CAMP KADIMAH - MIDWINTER BREAK! (AGES 4-13)

We've got you covered during your child(ren)'s midwinter break! We provide a warm, nurturing and safe environment for your camper(s) full of fun activities including special guests, arts and crafts, science, drama and much more! Spaces are limited so be sure to register early to avoid disappointment!

March 16 - 20 | 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Monday - Thursday) | 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. (Friday)

Fee: \$65 per day | \$175 3 days | \$275 5 days

CAMP KADIMAH - PASSOVER PARTY! (AGES 4-13)

By popular demand, Camp Kadimah returns for our very first Pesach edition!

Your campers won't want to miss out on three days jam packed full of fun, with all the features that makes Kadimah the jewel of the Jewish community. We will be having special guests, arts and crafts, science, drama and much more! Spaces are limited so be sure to register early!

April 13, 14, 17 | 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Monday and Tuesday) | 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. (Friday)

Fee: \$65 per day | \$175 for 3 days

For more information and registration please contact

905-648-0605 | www.hamiltonjcc.com

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WINTER20 SPRING20



HARVEY STARKMAN

“Are the outcomes of our lives, like the arc of a spinning dreidel, governed by miracle or chance? If they are, my family landed on Gimmel.

MIRACLES AND THE CHANCES OF A LIFETIME

THEY CALL CHANUKAH “the prettiest holiday of them all.” When I stand in front of the *hanukkiyah* with my wife, my sons and daughters-in-law, and our five grandchildren, I think not only of the wonder of the Chanukah story, but of the wonder that I and they are here at all.

If you think about it, everyone’s life is miraculous, from conception forward. There is chance at every turn. I am perhaps more sensitive to the idea of chance than others. If I were more religious, I might use a different word. But that my father lived beyond his twenties, that he came to Canada when very few Jews were admitted, that he worked, married, had children and grandchildren and lived a full life here from 1935 until his death in 1990, was grounded in one single, chance conversation.

In 1935, my father Jack Starkman was 21 years old, living in a shtetl in southeast Poland called Klimontow. His father died when Jack was young, but paternal uncles and aunts had come to Canada in the early 1900s, part of a wave of Jewish immigration from Poland and Russia that revitalized existing Jewish communities across the country, including our communities in Toronto and Hamilton. By the 1920s and 1930s, the barriers to immigration — particularly immigration from marginalized groups like Eastern European Jews — had been erected and fortified. Those were the years when “none was too many.”

Cut to Toronto. It’s also 1935 and 25-year-old Allan Grossman was courting Jack’s cousin, Ethel Starkman. Grossman was laying the basis for a future career in politics that would see him elected municipally in 1952, provincially in 1955, and elevated to a cabinet position in the Ontario government in 1960. But all that lay ahead. In 1935, Grossman was still at the boasting stage, bragging about his connections and influence. A skeptic, Jack’s uncle demanded proof. The challenge probably went like this: “If you’re such a big macher, why don’t you bring more family to Canada?” To my eternal gratitude, Allan Grossman did. Money was raised for train

fare to Ottawa, hotel accommodation, and probably to schmear a political palm or two. In the end, Grossman returned to Toronto with a blank entry permit in hand.

Because my father was the eldest of three children, my grandmother Kaela decided that he should be the one to come. It was Jack’s goal to work hard and bring the rest of his family to safety. That goal was never realized. Germany invaded Poland in 1939. In 1942, the Shoah began in earnest. In October, Kaela, Simcha, Chaim and other members of my family perished at Treblinka.

Jack never completely overcame his survivor guilt. He questioned whether his was the right name to appear on the permit. He wondered if one of his brothers, given the chance, might have succeeded, as if the isolated actions of one man could have changed their fate.

But Jack did take the chance he was given, and he used it well. In 1942, he met and married Lillian Caplan, a Hamilton girl from a typically large York Street family. My maternal grandparents, Shalom and Rivka became his parents; he had two sons and three grandchildren when he died. Two more followed his death. There are currently five great grandchildren, the eldest also named Jack. He embraced his new country and its language with a passion. As a landed Torontonian, he had little good to say about my mother’s hometown. Nevertheless, whenever we crossed the Canada / US border and the customs inspector asked him where he was born, my father, strange as it seems, would invariably answer ‘Hem-il-tun’ in his soft Polish Yiddish accent. Remarkably, we were always waved through.

Are the outcomes of our lives, like the arc of a spinning Hanukkah dreidel, governed by miracle or chance? If they are, my family landed on Gimmel.

Harvey Starkman is a Toronto-based writer. He dedicates this, his first HJN article to the Caplan, Cohen, and Foreman families who bind him to the Hamilton community.



TAMMY KAPLAN ZABARI

“No matter what you believe, it’s clear that this time of year leaves many of us feeling under the weather because of shorter exposure to sunlight.

IN THE DARKNESS, LET THERE BE LIGHT FESTIVALS

AS THE WINTER months are upon us, the days get shorter and the nights get longer. Many start feeling those winter blues. But there’s a bright side — it is time for Chanukah. Chanukah, the Jewish holiday of light, brings with it eight nights of glimmering candles. But that’s not all. It also brings comfort foods, such as the ever popular warm, greasy latkes or sweet jelly-filled donuts and fun games, such as spinning the dreidels and winning chocolate coins.

Coincidentally, a variety of holidays and festivals of light are also celebrated around the world. Yet, this is no surprise. Many cultures, both ancient and modern, held feasts and celebrations around winter solstice, which is the shortest day and longest night in the Northern Hemisphere. After winter solstice, daylight hours start getting longer and it therefore marks the coming of spring. Fire, and later lights, were used to drive away the darkness and gloom. In some cultures, light is believed to drive away the evil spirits or is symbolic of the sunlight so sorely missed in the winter months. Festivals of light were often related to religious and spiritual significance, such as the rebirth of the spirit, as well as signifying good overcoming evil. Today, many of these events have lost much of their religious meaning and emphasize the more consumeristic aspects.

Here are a few interesting facts for history buffs. In ancient Rome and in Persian cultures, birthday celebrations of Mithra, the ancient Persian god of light, were celebrated on Dec. 25. During the week leading up to solstice, Romans also observed Saturnalia, a hedonistic celebration with feasts of food and drink in honour of the god of agriculture. Scandinavian cultures celebrated Yule from the period of solstice onwards, which marked the return of the sun. Huge logs known as Yule logs would be brought home and burned for up to 12 days of festivities.

In Chinese societies, Dong Zhi is the celebration of winter solstice, a time to

welcome the return of longer days and the positive energy accompanying the daylight. The traditional food of these celebrations are rice balls called Tang Yuan.

Let’s not forget Christmas, a holiday often celebrated with bright lights, decorating trees, gifts and food, focusing on themes of rebirth and renewal. Some theorists have claimed that the Catholic Church chose the date of Dec. 25 to replace ancient pagan beliefs.

No matter what you believe, it’s clear that this time of year leaves many of us feeling under the weather because of shorter exposure to sunlight. Professionals refer to it as seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a depression that hits during the winter months. Scientists have found that one of the more successful treatments is light therapy. Light therapy uses full spectrum light to counteract the short days and the body’s internal clock, which gets thrown off balance and alters our mood. Light affects the levels of serotonin and melatonin in our bodies. Therapists recommend the use of light boxes for this type of therapy.

It seems that ancient civilizations had the winter blues figured out, celebrating light in the darkest of winter days. Judaism, as do other cultures, uses this period to celebrate the miracle of light and the symbolic triumph of good over evil, to help our people live through the long winter months and look forward to spring. Instead of letting winter gloom and cabin fever affect you, go celebrate a holiday with lights and food. Happy Chanukah!

Tammy Kaplan Zabari and her family are newcomers to the Hamilton Jewish community. A reader, a writer and mother who has worked in the technology and financial sectors for many years, Kaplan Zabari, when not at her computer, can be found spending time with her two kids or Israeli dancing the night away.



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BEN SHRAGGE

“We associate Yiddish with weepy, overfed milkmen who can’t control their families; not shtetl avengers machine-gunning Nazis.

THE GLORY OF YIDDISH KISHKES

“YIDDISH” AND “GLORY” are two words not often joined. Ironically, when Yiddish first comes to mind, we likely think of what Yiddish itself criticizes with that glorious word schmaltz. Schmaltz literally means rendered chicken fat, in which form it is delicious. But figuratively, schmaltz refers to phony sentimentality: show tunes written by committee. A 2019 Guardian headline, “I didn’t want any schmaltz in this Fiddler on the Roof,” is a headline precisely because schmaltz is what we expect from most Fiddlers on the Roof.

In 2018, an album of rediscovered Yiddish anti-fascist music was released into our (supposedly) post-Yiddish, post-fascist world. If critic Lionel Trilling’s observation that “the essence of art is unexpectedness” is correct—which it is—then Yiddish Glory, the album’s title, strikes the perfect note. We don’t expect to hear a Yiddish song called “Mayn Pulemyot” (My Machine Gun). But here it is, with lyrics written by a Jewish Red Army soldier during the Second World War: “I lie beside my machine gun / And softly sing a Yiddish tune.”

We associate Yiddish with weepy, overfed milkmen who can’t control their families; not shtetl avengers machine-gunning Nazis. The Yiddishist Max Weinreich famously said, explaining the contempt held for Yiddish in Yiddish, a shprakh iz a dialekt mit an armey un flot (A language is a dialect with an army and a navy). Despite being the official language of Siberia’s Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Yiddish never achieved the pomp that comes with having its own flag and border. Yet half a million Jews, many speaking Yiddish, fought for their lives under the banner of the Soviet Union.

Under the banner of the 2019 Marvin and Lillian Goldblatt Lecture series, Drs. Anna Shternshis (who unearthed the songs) and Psoy Korolenko (who composed the music) spoke about and performed Yiddish Glory at McMaster University on October 23. The audience wasn’t witnessing some ancient reenactment of a long-dead language. Our city’s own Yiddish-language newspaper, Yiddishe Shtime de Hamiltoner (Jewish Voice of Hamilton), was published into the 1940s. My father used Yiddish to communicate with our Moldovan-born nanny in the 1980s. Even today, Yiddish-fluent Soviet veterans still march on Victory Day in Brooklyn and Jerusalem.

Erev Second World War, there were roughly 11 million Yiddish speakers worldwide. Scholar Ruth Wisse writes: “Hitler’s

war against the Jews was simultaneously a war against Yiddish, which was the creation of European Jewry and the main repository of its modern culture.” After the war, six million Yiddish speakers remained. Their language was then repressed as subversive in the Soviet bloc, scorned as a relic of exile in Israel and ground into schmaltz in the West. But imagine: without the fascist interruption, an additional five million Yiddish speakers would have continued to speak and sing the mame-loshn (mother tongue) in Europe’s lost Ashkenazi heartland.

Author Michael Chabon was inspired to write *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union* by an outdated traveller’s phrasebook he found, its advice on how to say “I will call a policeman” in Yiddish now made horribly useless. In an essay on the novel’s counterfactual origins, he writes: “The countryside would retain large pockets of country people whose first language was still Yiddish . . . A surprisingly large number of these people would be my relations. I would be able to visit them, the way Irish Americans I knew were always visiting second and third cousins in Galway or Cork.”

Very conceivably, some of these lost European Yiddish speakers would have visited us, and we could hear Yiddish spoken in downtown Hamilton today. In 1941, half of Hamilton’s Jews identified Yiddish as their first language. What if those numbers had been sustained with new migration? Laid-off Bundist steelworkers would order a topl topl and kibitz at Tim Hortons. Waves of Galitzianers and Litvaks would replenish our aging, gentrifying stock with radical old-country Yiddishkeit. But though a new readership for Yiddishe Shtime de Hamiltoner was not to be, their unborn spirit can still inspire.

The yekke Walter Benjamin wrote, in weighty German: “In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.” To paraphrase him, in crude Yinglish: “We must wrest ‘Tradition’ away from the schmaltz that is about to turn it into a show tune.” Yiddish glory lives on in more than just lecture halls and alternate histories. It lives on in our kishkes: our guts, should we choose to remember those who lived by them and spilled them.

Ben Shragge is the digital editor of the Hamilton Jewish News.

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JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

ALEXIS WENZOWSKI
JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

HEADING INTO 2020, Jewish Family Services (JFS) will continue to create opportunities and supports that are no-barrier, safe and accessible to anyone—at any stage and at any age. Our group-based programming includes the following:

Family Workshops

These informative and practical workshops offer practical, skills-based education on real issues affecting children and families. Please join us at “Emotional Resilience” on Jan. 8 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. with community member, Tal Shaish.

Hear Now!

A course for individuals struggling with hearing loss and their supports taught by Anita Bernstein. Participants will learn how to lip read and gain new communication skills aimed at reducing social isolation.

Grief Group

Grief occurs at all stages in life, and this group, open to anyone experiencing loss or

difficulty with significant life changes, is a place to get support.

If you're interested in registering for any of the above, email chrisn@hamiltonjfs.ca or visit hamiltonjfs.ca.

Poverty reduction is important work for JFS. A 2011 survey on Jewish poverty showed that Jewish adults have a poverty rate of 14.6 per cent, while Jewish seniors have an overall poverty rate of 15.6 per cent. Those most at risk include the disabled, Holocaust survivors (especially if they live on their own), immigrants, and children being raised in single mother households.

At Jewish Family Services, we work with anyone affected by poverty. Our current initiatives include our financial assistance program, Holocaust claims (currently we support more than 18 survivors on an annual basis), employment counselling, the Kosher Food Bank and food security for seniors. Throughout 2020, we will be focusing on helping participants connect to the proper supports, enhancing employment counselling resources and creating more social participation opportunities for those marginalized by poverty.

TAS RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

DORA-ANN COHEN ELLISON

Temple Anshe Sholom Religious School continues to add new activities to our school day. Twice a month we gather in the beautiful park surrounding the Temple to pray and explore the blessings in nature together for Families in the Forest Shabbat. All are welcome to join us at 11:45 am on Jan. 18, dressed for prayer and exploration outside! On Wednesday Dec. 11, Temple and Beth Jacob students will return to Shalom Village to spread joy and smiles with songs and special performances about love and caring, and ending with a few rounds of dreidel.

Looking for some Pre-Chanukah Fun? Children Age 3.5 to 10 are invited to a PJ and popcorn movie party on Dec. 8 at 2 p.m. featuring Toy Story 4. Drop off the kids at Temple and get some Chanukah shopping

done! The cost is \$5 per child.

This year, Temple Anshe Sholom lost Ellen Hoffman, z”l, congregant and passionate teacher in our religious school. Ellen lived to inspire our students with her passion for Jewish music, Yiddish and traditions. She sang through the halls and loved to sing and drum with her students. As Ellen was a joyful teacher and supporter of our religious school, our education committee is remembering Ellen at a memorial concert on Sunday, Jan. 19 at 2 p.m. This will be a lively concert for all ages. Tickets are \$18 and can be purchased at tasmemorialconcert.eventbrite.ca. (See ad on page 19 for details)

Thank you for your continued support and I hope to see you at one of our many programs,

BETH JACOB HEBREW SCHOOL

BY EINAV SYMONS

BETH JACOB STUDENTS are making great strides in their learning with the implementation of the modified Hebrew learning this year. After learning and celebrating the holidays, the students began learning in small groups. These strategically assigned groups provide the students with great opportunity to advance through the the Hebrew letters at a good systematic pace. The additional staff hired this year, also allows for an advanced group learning conversational Hebrew. Students who have opted for the additional Hebrew enrichment on Mondays enjoyed

such opportunities as baking solely using Hebrew vocabulary.

The entire community is welcome to join us at our Chanukah dinner on Dec. 22. Please contact the shul office at 905.522.1351 for further information.

Beth Jacob Hebrew School meets on Wednesdays from 4:30-6:15 and optional Hebrew enrichment meets on Mondays from 4:15-5:15 p.m. For more information or to register, please call the office at 905-522-1351 or email Einav Symons at school@bethjacobsynagogue.ca.

MCMMASTER HILLEL

BY JUDITH DWORKIN,
DIRECTOR, MCMMASTER HILLEL

McMaster Hillel hosted Holocaust Education Week the week of Nov. 4 to engage and educate both the Jewish and greater McMaster community on the Holocaust. We were extremely fortunate to hear Holocaust survivor, Elly Gotz share his story with us. The more than 75 people who attended the event were inspired by his strength and positive outlook on life.

McMaster Hillel also hosted an exhibit at the Mills Library of survivors' stories, on loan to us from the Hamilton Jewish Federation. In conjunction with

Liberation75, the largest international event to mark the 75th anniversary of liberation from the Holocaust, Hillel invited students to sign “An Open Letter of Support and Commitment to Holocaust Survivors,” which expressed our appreciation for all that survivors have given us and honours the memory of the victims of the Holocaust through a commitment to personal action.

We concluded the week with an Israel-themed Shabbat dinner, which was a meaningful way to wrap up a week full of education and remembrance.



Kehila students at a recent climate crisis demonstration in Hamilton.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NATASHA ROMM

KEHILA HESCHEL

BY ANITA BERNSTEIN

A SPECIAL FOCUS of Kehila Heschel School is a commitment to environmental education and stewardship as a component of Jewish teaching. As Kehila Heschel's students began the 2019-2020 school year, they were immediately immersed in discussions related to the global environmental crisis and how they could be involved in an active way in Tikkun Olam.

Kehila Heschel students learn about the environmental crisis across every curriculum subject. In social studies and science they learned about climate change and its impact on weather patterns, farming, plant growth, insects and animals and their habitats. As they discussed Rosh Hashanah, they considered the impact of pollinators on the special foods we enjoy at that time of year. In language arts, they read about how a young environmental activist brought global attention to the climate crisis and they created eco-friendly posters with

empowering messages.

On Sept. 27, Kehila Heschel's Grade 4 students joined other young people worldwide and participated in the climate crisis demonstration in Hamilton. This was an excellent opportunity for our students to witness the potential they have, as individuals, to make a difference as a community, and to see history being made.

Building on the momentum of this event, Kehila Heschel students, across all grades, are learning about ways to conserve resources, recycle and reduce waste and as part of the Eco School project, are committed to work towards zero waste at our school.

Kehila Heschel's students are endeavouring to be environmental ambassadors and in their own way are striving to put into action Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel words, “Every little deed counts.”



CHANUKAH, HANNUKAH, CHANNUKAH, OR HANUKKAH.

REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU SPELL IT, WE WISH YOU ALL THE BEST DURING THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS.



JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE

BY **AIMEE WIGLEY**
JCC FAMILY PROGRAM COORDINATOR

WHEN IT COMES to the holidays, many people often find themselves in a pinch when it comes to child care. We have an amazing resource in Camp Kadimah, one that can surely extend beyond making summer memories. For Winter Camp at JHamilton, we have quite the line-up of specialists, including an art specialist from the Dundas Valley School of Art, the always delicious Chocolate Tales, the ever engaging Mad Science...to name but three. Every day is jam-packed with activities, carefully crafted exclusively for Kadimah.

Whether you choose to sign up for one day, or to bundle up and save, this is a seasonal opportunity that you don't want to miss. Winter Camp takes place at JHamilton. Be sure to enroll early to avoid disappointment. Winter Camp at the J will be taking place:

Monday, Dec. 30 | 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 31 | 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 2 | 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 3 | 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Registration is \$65/day | \$150/3 days | \$210/4days for JK to Grade 6.

There's no reason our children should



Max Molina enjoys a JCC activity.

have to wait until summer to experience all that Camp Kadimah has to offer. Check out hamiltonjcc.com along with the JCC Hamilton and Doing Jewish in Hamilton Facebook pages to see all of the amazing programs in store for the J. Upcoming offerings include a St. John's Ambulance Babysitting Course, Mad Science After School Program, Weekly Drama Workshops, Family Day Fun, Purim Princess Tea and so much more. For more information, call 905-648-0613, ext. 307.

TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM

AS PART OF THE plans for Temple Anshe Sholom's 170th anniversary celebrations, the synagogue is launching an archive project. The first synagogue in Hamilton and the first Reform congregation in all of Canada is seeking to collect and digitize a wide array of artifacts including photos, documents, bulletins and other TAS publications, certificates and personal items such as wedding and B'nei Mitzvah invitations. The items will then be organized, cataloged and displayed in a variety of formats.

"Such a project is long overdue," says Rabbi Jordan Cohen, "and I am excited that we are reclaiming our history in this way. One hundred and seventy years is a lot of history for a synagogue. We have a lot of work to do."

Previously consecration and confirmation class photos, portraits of the board of trustees and other auspicious events were displayed on the walls of the Temple's lower foyer and school wing. Portraits of rabbis, cantors and Temple presidents

were on display in an upper hallway. During renovations five years ago, these pictures were all removed. Plans are to develop a modern gallery to display the photographs of the spiritual and lay-leaders upstairs, while mounting monitors in the lower foyer to present a slide show of all the other board, class and event pictures. In addition, a museum style display will be created to present the history of the congregation.

The Temple is drawing on the resources of the Hamilton Public Library's Local History and Archives department and the Ontario Jewish Archives to help guide the collecting and organizing of memorabilia. The project will be officially launched at Anshe Sholom's 170th Anniversary Benefit Gala, which will take place on Sat. March 28, 2020 and will be inaugurated at the conclusion of the 170th year celebrations. Sessions for community members to bring in their artifacts to be scanned will be held throughout the fall months.

BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE

BY **SHIRA KATES**,
SYNAGOGUE MANAGER

WHAT'S IN A NAME? What is the significance behind the letters in your name - in your loved ones names?

Have you ever wondered how a Torah is written? Have you ever imagined getting involved in the process?

Your letters are waiting in our unfinished Torah - choose Hebrew letters that are meaningful to you; watch as soferet Rabbi Yonah Lavery-Yisraeli completes your letters in front of your eyes!

We'll book you a personal appointment to complete the letter writing, with a photo and certificate commemorating the

experience.

Letters are available for \$72 each, and your generous donation is eligible for a tax receipt.

Dedications can be made in honour of: children or grandchildren, parents, birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, b'nai mitzvah, graduation - it's up to you!

Celebration with the completed Torah: Sunday Dec. 22, during our congregational Chanukah dinner.

For more information or to reserve your letters, contact Shira at shira@bethjacob-synagogue.ca or (905) 522 1351 ext. 10.



HHA students gather for a photo at the school's 10th annual Terry Fox run.



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Give the gift of a Warm Hug on a cold winter's day this holiday season, by making a donation to the Shalom Village Snowflake campaign.

YOU can join the Shalom Village family in making Chanukah happy for everyone. Your gift can help us spread love and laughter by making a donation to our 3rd Annual Snowflake Appeal.

For every \$25 donated, Shalom Village will display a snowflake throughout the residences—to celebrate your generous gift and spread kindness throughout Shalom Village.

Remember Shalom Village for your year-end giving. When you give by December 31st, 2019, your gift will also be tax deductible.

MARGARET'S LEGACY

BY REBECCA SHAPIRO

OVER THE PAST YEAR, Margaret's Legacy has been busy developing a modern curriculum that is positioned to address the needs of today's youth. The significance and importance of Holocaust education only grows stronger as our world changes and children are less likely to meet and hear personal accounts from Holocaust survivors.

The new curriculum, which is called "Journeys," uses the micro-history of Margaret and Arthur's story as a springboard for learning about the Holocaust, while integrating Holocaust studies, social justice, anti-bullying culture with both provincial and state curriculums.

Canadian students in Grades 5-8 from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, public and private schools, will appreciate the educational approach, as it is relatable to everyone.

Through social media, today's students are excited to bridge classic journaling with modern methods of storytelling and multimedia posting. For those not interested in taking the social journaling route, an adaptation is included for a more classic approach.

Some ideas and concepts that are explored include setting parameters for respectful and healthy dialogue, understanding



Margaret's Legacy founder, Danna Horwood during a visit to Bishop Stachan School during Holocaust Education Week last year.

the difference between refugees and immigrants, a timeline of the Holocaust, exploring propaganda as it applies to media literacy, how good people can do bad things — the importance of being an upstander, examining myths and stereotypes around those seeking new lives in Canada and exploring ways to better support refugees and immigrants.

Colin Mackenzie, a Halifax-based public school educator who laid the groundwork for the curriculum, believes that Holocaust education should be fully integrated into all subjects, while integrating modern technology, historical context, citizenship education, bullying prevention, current affairs and social emotional

development. Teachers often complain that they do not have time to delve into meaningful themes, but with this curriculum, they can accomplish it all in an engaging way. Each mini-lesson ends with an opportunity to expand on the topic through inquiry learning.

The Journeys curriculum will give students a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities as contributing members of a democratic country, and teach them to make independent decisions based on reasoning supported by facts they independently and collaboratively gather, and help them act with compassion toward others.

COLLABORATION PRODUCES BOOK OF TORAH INSIGHTS

BY LESLIE SELEVAN

WHO WOULD HAVE ever imagined that two women and one teenage boy living in Hamilton, Ontario, would collaborate on a book of such significance? Well it happened. Leslie Selevan, Rebecca Shapiro and Moshe Tzvi Shapiro published Torah Bites for your Shabbat Table on Oct. 17, 2019, a book about the weekly parsha in the book of Genesis.

In addition, within 24 hours of the release, the book was the No. 1 bestseller in a few categories on Amazon, which included Christian Wisdom Liturgy. Not a list any of us would have expected, but it was proof that people were interested in the book.

While we were compiling and writing this book, it was our goal to inspire the reader by transmitting the insightful Torah thoughts of Rabbi Rosner's weekly lectures into short, palatable, practical and meaningful ideas that would be relevant to anyone at any age or stage. My day would not be complete if I did not listen to my daily dose of Rabbi Rosner's Torah. It was as if his words were tailored made for me, to give me the strength and courage to face any challenges that would come my way. This was a resounding force that propelled me to write the book, so I could share his insights with others to enjoy and appreciate.

Rebecca and Moshe Tzvi spent many hours poring over my detailed notes and sources to create an abridged and easily digestible version.

This book was a labour of love that has transformed and motivated us to grow in our relationship with God and become better versions of ourselves. It is our hope that you will feel the same way.



Leslie Selevan and Rebecca Shapiro

PHOTO BY DONNA WAXMAN

DRESS FOR EMPLOYMENT CLOTHING DRIVE

CAROL KRAMES

A community responsibility that we all share as Jews is to give charity. The charity can be monetary, but the gift of clothing is considered a great kindness.

On Sunday, March 29, from noon to 7 p.m. JHamilton will host Dress for Employment Day, an initiative co-sponsored by the synagogues, the JCC, the Hamilton Jewish Federation, Jewish Family Services and Na'amat. We have also been working with Out of The Cold and the Salvation Army.

We all know how hard it can be to go for an employment interview. Imagine how much more difficult it would be if you didn't have the right clothes to wear. This clothing drive is our attempt to make this experience a little less traumatic.

We are looking for clothes for both men and women that are stylish and clean that will help a person looking for employment feel proud to wear them. We ask that clothes be either hung on a hanger or folded neatly.

Please drop off your donations at Beth Jacob or at JHamilton before Jan. 31, 2020. Thank you for your participation in this worthwhile event.



May this holiday season bring peace, health and happiness throughout the coming year.

Chag Chanukah Sameach!

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SHOULD YOU HAVE the opportunity to visit Israel, don't miss out on seeing the Books of Honour at the headquarters of Keren Kayemeth LeYisrael (KKL) in Jerusalem.

The Honour Books represent a treasure chest of information and a unique source for historians, genealogists or people searching for information about their ancestors.

The original seven Honour Books — the Golden Book, the Children's Book, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Book, the Marriage Book, the Book of Plantings, the Book of Special Gifts and the Aliyah Book— constitute an expression of the tie between the Jewish Diaspora and the Land of Israel. Because these records go back so many years, they can provide the missing link in a family lineage by noting the benefactor of the inscription.

The books are a lasting record of family history. In one case, a family found a bar mitzvah dedication for their grandfather who had perished in the Holocaust. Through the book they were able to retrace their family genealogy, which had all but been lost in Europe.

The first Honour Book, the Golden Book, was created by Dr. Theodor Herzl, who decided to commemorate the delegates at the Fifth Zionist Congress who voted for

and raised funds for the establishment of JNF.

Over the years, the pages of the Golden Books have filled with thousands of names including those of kings, presidents and statesmen from many nations, such as Lord Balfour, Sir Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Professor Zvi Schapira, David Wolfsohn and Moses Montifiore, as well as Jewish people around the world.

The Bar Mitzvah Books were initiated in 1936 and hold more than 100,000 names and photos of children commemorating their bar/bat mitzvahs. Both the Children's Book and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Books include a place for a photo and for pre-Holocaust bar/bat mitzvahs, these may be the only surviving photos available of the individual who perished in the Holocaust.

Visitors to the Golden Book Hall are astonished at the beauty of the books. They seem to feel as if they stand in the presence of the founders of Zionism and the State of Israel. To have a name inscribed in one of these Books of Honour — perhaps a new baby, a bar or bat mitzvah, a milestone event, call our office at 905-527-5516. If you would like to view these books and locate your name or the name of a loved one, call our office and we will arrange a visit for you while you are in Israel.

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

BY HAZEL BOON

JEWS HAVE MANY things that bind us together. Among those is our common past. No matter where your Jewish ancestors hail from, each family has been affected by the monumental events that have shaped our history. Beginning with the expulsions from Ancient Israel and the ensuing Diaspora, to the Crusades, Inquisition, Enlightenment, the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, your family has in some way been involved.

While it is common that after a generation or two, one may no longer understand where your family fits into each of these events, everyone has affected where you live and your place in society.

With the proliferation of internet resources over the past 25 years, it is now easier than ever to research your family history and discover the timeline of your forefathers. Websites like JewishGen.org offer, at no charge, access to more than 30

million records across 128 countries. With a little digging, you would no doubt find something pertaining to you or your ancestral families.

The perfect way to get started is to contact or attend a meeting of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Hamilton and Area (JGSH). For more than 15 years, this close knit, not-for-profit group has supported countless numbers of amateur researchers get started on their journey of self discovery. Our upcoming meetings will be held at Temple Anshe Sholom on Jan. 8, Feb. 5 and March 4, 2020 at 7:30 pm. Each will showcase a guest speaker addressing a relevant topic of interest. First-time guests are free so there is nothing to lose, and you are guaranteed to learn something.

For more information, check out our website at www.jgsh.org or contact Hazel Boon at 905-524-3345 or jgshamilton@gmail.com.

JNF Hamilton would like to extend our heartfelt thanks and kol-hakavod to the Hamilton community for your support in 2019 and remind you that all **BLUE BOX DONATIONS** must be received by **December 18th 2019** to qualify for a 2019 tax receipt.

All **YISKOR DONATIONS** must be received by **December 31st** to qualify for a 2019 tax receipt.



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“There’s something about the United States that’s different from the traditional Jewish narrative.” **JUSTIN REGAN**

ROAD TRIPPING PODCASTER SEARCHES FOR AMERICAN JUDAISM

Justin Regan’s podcast, The American Rabbi Project offers insights on what it means to be a Jew in America today

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

DON’T WORRY ABOUT finding the answers, a wise man once said. It’s more important to live the questions.

American freelance journalist Justin Regan set out to do just that when he quit his job in public radio 18 months ago to embark on an ambitious road trip across the United States with the goal of interviewing a rabbi in each state.

Regan, 27, was in the area during the High Holiday period when the HJN encountered him at JHamilton working on his podcast, The American Rabbi Project. A frequent visitor to the city, where his girlfriend works in the Jewish community, Regan told the HJN that his podcast came about as a result of his seeking to understand “the beautiful complexities of American Judaism.”

Raised in an interfaith family—his mother is Jewish and his father, Catholic—Regan sees himself as a product of the Jewish American life he is so driven to understand. As a child, he received a nominal Jewish education, but dropped out of Hebrew school just before the bar mitzvah program. In high school and college however, Regan increasingly began to embrace his Jewish identity.

“I’ve been growing my Judaism for many years now,” he said. “So in a way, this project is also a way for me to connect and learn.”

Regan’s premise going into his

project was that Jewish practice in America is distinct from any other time or place. “There’s something about the United States that’s different from the traditional Jewish narrative,” he said. “It seems that this is a place of safety, where we can be whatever we want to be, but at the same time, there’s more possibility of people losing touch with their Judaism. These are the types of questions I have and wanted to learn more about, and I figured one way to do that was to talk to people from a wide variety of backgrounds and denominations.”

The American Rabbi Project’s first season features interviews with Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Renewal rabbis in the Southwest, New England and Washington, D.C. Three of the nine rabbis are women. Regan’s first interview was with the Chabad rabbi he befriended during his student days at the University of Arizona. He chose his other subjects based on their online footprint or unique circumstances, such as the Salt Lake City rabbi who conducts both Conservative and Reform services in a single merged congregation or the prominent Washington, D.C. rabbi who once studied Torah with President Barack Obama and whose 2014 letter informing his congregation that he was gay went viral.

Some episodes contain particularly insightful sound bites, such as the observation made by a Vermont-based Renewal rabbi that “in America every Jew is a Jew by



Justin Regan at work on his podcast, The American Rabbi Project.

choice” or a Massachusetts-based activist Reform rabbi who stated that to be a Jew in America today is to “hold with great tenderness our own history of being a persecuted minority and stand shoulder to shoulder with the folks that are currently being targeted.”

The second season opens with Regan’s interview with an Orthodox rabbi who found his calling presiding over a tiny Conservative congregation in Appalachian West Virginia. A comic book enthusiast who finds inspiration in the moral messages of Superman and Batman’s Jewish creators, this rabbi talked about the importance of “weaponizing goodness” in the wake of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, “by speaking out, speaking up and doing good.” But Regan’s personal reflections make this episode particularly poignant.

After staying with friends and family in the Philadelphia area, Regan entered a three-week period he describes as the hardest part of the road trip. It was November 2018 and Regan was alone and tired of travelling. A month had passed since the Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh and he was reeling from news of a mass shooting in his hometown of Thousand Oaks, California, followed less than 24 hours later by the eruption of the Woolsey Fire, which saw his parents and a good friend forced to evacuate their homes. Standing in the deserted downtown square of Charlottesville, Virginia, a few nights later, Regan stared up at the yellow tape-encased statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee, the focal point of the 2017 white supremacist rally. He felt strangely comforted when he noticed chalk

writing on the ground nearby that said, “We stand with Pittsburgh.”

“The energy seemed to have shifted,” Regan recalled thinking. That turned out to be the moment when Regan recognized that, were it not for his project, “West Virginia would have been the beginning of the end.” Instead, his podcast was beginning to mean much more to him than he ever would have imagined at the outset of what his adventures.

The American Rabbi Project podcast can be found wherever you get your podcasts or at rabbi-project.com. Topics include interfaith marriage, religious observance, concerns over anti-Semitism, and the difficult balance of being Jewish and American.

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Jaffe's poetry is one of confrontation and courage in the face of uncertainty and fear." **DAVID HASKINS** Author

GOLDBLATT LECTURE A MIX OF HUMOUR AND PATHOS

BY **PHYLLIS SHRAGGE**
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

HUMOUR AND PATHOS were coupled together in this year's Lillian and Marvin Goldblatt Lecture in Jewish Studies. The lecture/concert, Singing and Laughing Against Facism: Lost and Found Soviet Yiddish Songs of World War II, presented in October by McMaster University's Department of Religious Studies and The Socrates Project, exemplified how Soviet Jews used satirical music to sing in the face of the atrocities of war.

The basis of the presentation was the discovery in the 1990s of previously unknown Yiddish songs that were hidden in the basement of the National Library of Ukraine. The songs, collected by ethnomusicologist Moisei Beregovsky and other academics of the Kiev Cabinet for Jewish Culture, had been confiscated and concealed by the Soviet authorities in 1949.

The hand-written Yiddish documents dating from 1941 to 1947 contained thousands of songs written by Jews in Ukraine during the Second World War. Written by Jewish refugees, soldiers in the Red Army and Holocaust survivors, the lyrics ridiculed Hitler and fascism.

University of Toronto Professor Anna Shternshis unearthed the documents at the Ukrainian library in the early 2000s. Her work led to this project and eventual worldwide presentations.

At the local presentation, Professor Shternshis spoke on the history of the songs and their interpretation while Psoy Korolenko of Moscow and New York brought the music to life on the piano and with his vibrant singing voice.

Professor Shternshis is a specialist in Russian/Soviet Jewish history and Yiddish studies. Grammy-nominated singer Psoy Korolenko is a Slavist with a Ph.D. in Russian literature. He composed many of the tunes for the Yiddish lyrics. English translations were displayed on a Jumbotron screen.

The presentation gave voices to Soviet Jews who were oppressed under German occupation. They would not be silenced by Hitler or Stalin and were able to find humour in tragedy as they sought courage to go on with their lives.

Audience members described the songs as poignant and heart-wrenching, especially those written by children during the Holocaust.

One audience member who prefers to remain anonymous, said, "I can't even begin to describe how moved and mesmerized I was by Professor Shternshis' historical commentary and Psoy Korolenko's outstanding compositions based on the



Michaele-Sue Goldblatt shares a moment with Psoy Korolenko and Professor Anna Shternshis.

horrifying Yiddish lyrics of people suffering in the Holocaust. This collaboration brought to life the voices of the only eyewitness testimonies of Holocaust victims from shtetls in Ukraine, a chapter of history I knew very little about. The Yiddish lyrics, especially by the Ukrainian women and children, were painfully sad, but also surprisingly celebratory and funny. As a second-generation Holocaust survivor, I didn't feel comfortable laughing at the humorous lines in the songs, but I understood the victims' hatred and desire to ridicule Hitler and the need for humour to help keep their spirits up."

Alan Livingston, a member of the Hamilton-based klezmer band, Touch of Klez, said, "The performance of Psoy Korolenko was really phenomenal. His stirring voice and piano accompaniment brought the feelings in the songs and poetry to life. He is like an actor that becomes the character that he is portraying.

"The songs and words were stunning, touching and brought us moods that before this we could only have imagined and existed.

"The historical and documentary research done by Anna Shternshis was thorough and her words rekindled the emotions of the era. Much or all of what she discovered was compiled by Moisei Beregovsky. It is astounding that these documents from the Holocaust were preserved.

"On a personal note, as a member of Touch of Klez, many tunes in our repertoire are from Moisei Beregovsky collections, tunes that he found and preserved in the '20s, '30s and '40s in Eastern Europe. He was stopped and arrested during Stalin's post-World War II antisemitic crackdown. Without Beregovsky, much of klezmer would have been lost."

The Yiddish songs have been compiled as the Grammy-nominated album Yiddish Glory: The Lost Songs of World War II.

BOOK REVIEW

THE DAY I SAW WILLIE MAYS AND OTHER POEMS

by Ellen S. Jaffe
Pinking Shears Publications, 2019

REVIEWED BY **DAVID HASKINS**

*It all depends how you look at it,
what your mind can hold,
the baggage we need to carry and unpack
to understand these journeys,
speak our truths.*

("Luggage at Eight Years Old", p.31)

THERE ARE POETS who avoid the challenging issues. Ellen S. Jaffe is not one such poet. What she faces down in her personal life pours onto the page, and then links to a global history we too often push aside, because "It all depends... / what your mind can hold."

While at first the titular poem might seem mismatched to the book's heavier themes, Willie Mays's "ball hit so hard it's never / coming back" soon stands in for childhood memory itself. Did the 11-year-old girl see him hit that ball, or did she google the stat later? How are we to grasp meaning from distant events we may or may not have experienced, especially those so devastating to the human spirit as the death camps, or cruelties prosecuted against children? Not by turning away, this poet says.

In the expansive poem, "Luggage at Eight Years Old", a child begs his father to attend his soccer game. We see the stress of separation that shared custody imposes. But the poem doesn't stop here. It links to the Kindertransport extricating children to save their lives after Kristallnacht, to country after country denying entry to the Jewish refugee boat children, to First Nations children kidnapped from their families and taken to Residential schools, to Syrian children wrenched from their relatives in their flight to Lebanese camps, and to Mexican children imprisoned alone.

In this context of people fleeing for their

lives, leaving behind relatives and treasured belongings, objects like a home-run ball, an irretrievable broken doll, an old suitcase, a cream pitcher or a great-grandmother's recipe can substitute for a thwarted childhood, the loss of a nurturing family or an inter-generational thread of survival.

Jaffe writes with the conviction of prose and the musicality of poetry. A clever conceit frames a conversation about the Akedah in a supermarket between her great-grandmother and Sarah, the wife of Abraham. In "My Mother Flew Like a Kite," the fact that "My friend and I tried to hold her down" (p.23) confirms the apparent truth of the impossible metaphor. One poem is spoken by Red Riding Hood's wolf, another spoken by a stone that weighed down Virginia Woolf's body. These fantastical premises are matched by extraordinary events in the real world — a deer "break-dances her way" through a Metro food store; people trace their chalk outlines on James Street to commemorate those killed by Little Boy and Fat Man nuclear bombs.

Jaffe was diagnosed with cancer in 2019. Her poetry is one of confrontation and courage in the face of uncertainty and fear. When she finally declares in bold uppercase font YOU ARE GOING TO DIE or YOU ARE HERE NOW ("After the Diagnosis" p.84) she brings us to the resolution of the entire struggle between life and death. When life is threatened, we "live in the present time and space / travel from moment to moment." That is all, and that is sufficient. No further need of suitcases.

To purchase a copy of The Day I Saw Willie Mays and Other Poems, contact Ellen S. Jaffe, esjaffe@outlook.com.

David Haskins is author of a literary memoir, This House Is Condemned, Wolsak and Wynn, 2013. In 2020, his poetry book, Blood Rises, will be published by Guernica

Ellen Hoffman Memorial Concert

Join Temple Anshe Sholom at a memorial concert in support of education at Temple Anshe Sholom, featuring interactive music for all ages by Juno Winner Jack Grunsky and Cosima Grunsky, Temple students and the Temple choir.

Sunday, Jan. 18, 2019 at 2 p.m.
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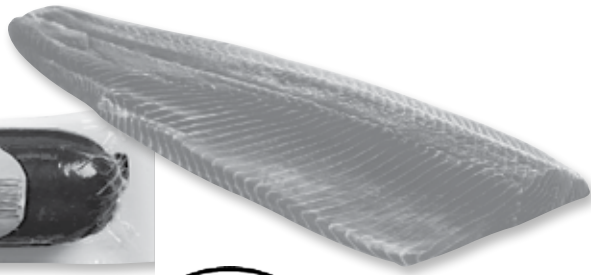
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