



HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

ק"ק פרחי קדש

**Department of Education
Report to the Annual General Meeting
November 2014- November 22, 2015**

Submitted by: Judy Winberg, Chair

Education Team

Debbie Spiegel, Director of Education

Rabbi Jordan Helfman

Lisa Isen Baumal, Director of Youth Engagement

Pam Hamovitch, Director of The Early Childhood Centre (ECC)

Dalia Alalouf, Hebrew Supervisor and B'nei Mitzvah Coordinator

Sharon Singer, Librarian

The Department of Education is comprised of the following areas:

- The Schwartz/Reisman Centre for Jewish Learning
- The Temple Schools: **Youth Education Centre**
 - The ECC (Early Childhood Centre)
 - Our Beginning Learners - Grades JK-7
 - Havaya – The Teen Experience – Grades 8-10
 - Bagrut – Grades 11-12
 - Student Teacher Training
 - Youth Activities
 - KEF
 - Holy Chag
 - YEAH & JVC
 - HABSTY
- Youth Education Task Force
- Youth Education Committee
- Library
- Bar/Bat Mitzvah Committee

THE GERALD SCHWARTZ/HEATHER REISMAN CENTRE FOR JEWISH LEARNING

- Les Rothschild, the Chair of the committee, continues to broaden the spectrum of programming for the Centre. The Israel Committee, Brotherhood and Sisterhood continue to

bring their own flavour of programming into the larger picture of the Centre. Collaboration and co-operation are constant, as planning together is ongoing.

- The Fall/Winter Highlights were published in booklet form with the Rosh Hashanah Bulletin. For all updates on programs, please consult our website, www.holyblossom.org/learning . The Adult Learning on-line calendar is consistently being updated on the website. Please consult the calendar for new and updated listings.
- **The Centre for Contemporary Jewish Literature at Holy Blossom Temple**
This Centre launched in January 2015 with **Cynthia Good** as Chair, to great success. The goal of this Centre is to bring contemporary Jewish literature to life, bringing in authors, film based on literature, and writers' workshops. We had a unique cadre of people joining us including:
Alison Pick
Anne Michaels, David Bezmogis and Joe Kertes
Evan Fallenberg as a writer in residence
Fall 2015 brings Presenting Hana's Suitcase – an investigative look at the book, the film and meeting the key people involved in the production
Spring 2016 will bring Dara Horn with her latest book on Maimonides.
- **The Centre for Arts and Culture at Holy Blossom Temple**
The Centre for Arts and Culture under the direction of **Gillian Helfield** has also gotten off to a great start. A Literary Salon kicked off the program last Spring, with a reading from Tilya Helfield. Many other programs have been a part of this Centre starting in Fall 2015, including a Book Talk by Hesh Troper, More than Just the Games, a book launch of My So-Called Friends and Me, by our member, Sharon Neiss, and a look at Israeli film with our Shinshinim,
- **Ongoing Learning**
 - Shabbat Morning Torah Study, Saturday at 9 am, Rabbi Splansky
 - Sisterhood Torah Study, Wednesdays at 9:30 am, Mark Goodman
 - Talmud, Thursday morning after Shacharit breakfast, Mark Goodman
 - Shabbat Beit Midrash program, facilitated by Marla Powers, meets monthly

Highlights post 2014 AGM - Spring 2015 include:

- Jewish Leadership Series with Rabbi Splansky/Lisa Taylor
- Jewish Communities Around the World programs ; co-Sponsored by Sisterhood (Ethiopia, Italy, India)
- Film Course with Stuart Hands
- Shalom Hartman Institute's iEngage – 9 sessions on Israel, Rabbi Satz
- Holocaust Education Week event, Professor Michael Marrus
- Dying With Dignity – a panel discussion, co-sponsored by Sisterhood
- Book talks; Alison Pick, Nora Gold and others
- Learning in Chevruta with Rabbi Helfman
- Rabbi Michael Stroh taught morning and evening (sponsored by Brotherhood) courses
- Chai Mitzvah, Rabbi Satz
- Brotherhood breakfasts
- Sisterhood Unique Lives series

- Beyond the Chuppah, for newly married and engaged couples, David and Eileen Berger
- Israel programming
 - Jim Lederman
 - Women Of the Wall (WOW) – Anat Hoffman, Leslie Sachs
 - 3 part course with Shinshinim
 - Posen Memorial Lecture Series, Prof. Gabi Ben-Dor

Highlights for this Fall 2015 include:

- Radical Judaism, Rabbi Moscowitz
- Mussar – Seeking Everyday Holiness, Rabbi Satz
- Aspirational Judaism, 2-year learning program for adults, Rabbis and Debbie Spiegel
- Sunday Book Club with Sharon Singer
- You Can Ukulele, Susan Baskin for all ages of Temple members
- Social Justice programming including: a four part series on looking at the perspectives of the First Nations community, a look at Toronto Poverty Reduction plan, a remembrance of the 40th anniversary of the Fall of Saigon.
- Holocaust Education week, on the theme of Liberation with Prof. Michael Marrus

YOUTH EDUCATION CENTRE

The Early Childhood Centre (ECC)

The Early Childhood Centre is comprised of all Early Childhood activities at Holy Blossom Temple including Little Blossoms (a Friday morning Parent/Grandparent and baby program) , the Pre-School which includes Nursery and Pre-Nursery classes and monthly Tot Shabbat programs.

Little Blossoms continues to be a sold-out experience. Classes ran throughout the year in Fall 2014-Spring 2015 and also Fall 2015 we again have a full complement, hosting a total of 45 children over 3 sessions.

Our Pre-School continues to be the best in our community. We have more non-member students than members, although we have worked hard this year to make our ECC families more engaged in programming, keeping these parents informed at many levels. Our enrollment this year is 93 children (48 students in Nursery – 3 year olds and 45 in pre-Nursery – 2 year olds).

This year the extended -day program, which includes lunch, continues to grow. There are 15 students extended day (until 3 PM) students ranging from 2-4 days a week.

Our Lower School

The Grades JK-5 continues to be active on Sunday mornings, and less so on Wednesday afternoons, as a result of the new model instituted over the past two years, where students attend either Sunday or Wednesday. Starting in Fall 2015 our Grade 2 students have Hebrew as a regular part of their schedule – bringing them for 3 hours instead of 2 hours.

- Our current numbers remain constant to last year, with the vast majority of children opting for the Sunday classes.
- Shabbat Family Education programs include the entire family. We have rolled out the Family programming to include it with other Temple programming – either with Family First Fridays or Shabbat morning Family Service for families with children ages 4-12. There are 6 of these programs throughout the school year.
- We continue to invite non-member families to Youth Education Centre through Grade 3. We currently have 15 students who are non-members.
- Our second year of KEF, our after-school program on Sundays for students in Grades JK - 2, in the Spring of 2015. This Fall KEF is for children in **JK-Grade 1**. We have 25 students enrolled this first term. These programs vary but all approach the activity with an added value of Judaica, or Hebrew component.
- The core of the Senior School remains strong. Havaya, (experience), for all students in Grades 8-10, include their formal learning with a variety of volunteer opportunities in Temple. Not all teens want a formal education experience. Havaya provides opportunities for teens to engage at Temple through worship (Torah/haftarah readers), as volunteers for holiday and festival programming or in any number of social justice and volunteer opportunities. We have had good success in attracting our teens to a variety of programs throughout our congregation.
- Bagrut (which means graduation) is specifically for students in grades 11 & 12 who will study once a month with the rabbi and also join in the volunteer activities of the Havaya teens. We have already documented the positive changes in our teen involvement and look forward to the continued success of this program.

In addition we have a very strong group of 14 teen madrichim (student teachers) who are committed to working and contributing their creativity each week. We have even produced strong song leadership amongst this group. Being flexible is important for this group of teens. We need to give these students options to keep them active and engaged in our Temple activities.

A key component of the madrichim program is Hadracha, teen leadership. Mentoring sessions take place monthly for all of our madrichim. Classroom management, lesson planning, and curriculum ideas are some of the topics discussed in these monthly sessions.

- Trips through Youth Education Centre
 - Israel Trip: This year we are inviting all members' children – not just those who are enrolled in the Youth Education Centre school in Grades 10-12 to join on our 10-day Israel trip during March Break.
 - In January 2015, our Grade 9s traveled to Washington DC as part of NFTY's L'Taken program and will again in January 2016. Seven Grade 9 students participated last year accompanied by Rabbi Satz and Lisa Isen Baomal.
- Project Tikvah is our program for students with learning challenges. These students attend Sunday or Wednesday Religious School classes and receive an additional ½ hour of specialized learning for Hebrew language with a tutor in a one-on-one session on Mondays. This program builds the confidence needed to read Hebrew with a sense of fluency and ownership.

- Our Schools continue to maintain an integrated model with our Youth engagement program – all youth groups and youth activities. Since Lisa Isen Baomal has assumed the position of Director of Youth Engagement, there are continuous conversations and planning with the School and Youth activities programming (See Youth report below).

Youth Education Task Force

From February – June 2015 a strong group of volunteers worked together, under the leadership of Judy Winberg, department Chair, and Dr. Michelle Lynn –Sachs, as our consultant, to assess and make recommendations for our Religious School programs. An intensive study of programs across North America led the Task Force to significant **First Steps** and **Recommendations** for the schools and the Youth Education Centre committee. Many of the First Steps have already been implemented and we look forward to many more significant changes in our program. We have already seen the benefit of many of these changes by both parents and students, in particular weekly updates of each class are posted on the website with easy access for parents to review information with their children to continue the conversation which occurred in class at home.

Faculty

Our faculty maintains excellence in educational our educational setting. We have had a significant turnover in our faculty over the past few years with great success. Our faculty are talented, energetic, wonderful role-models, Jewish professionals (particularly in Senior School) who speak our children’s language. We maintain a standard of excellence in and out of the classroom – maintaining on-going, communication between teachers and families before and after lessons. Qualified teachers who have a love for teaching, love of Reform Jewish practice, and love of children are our most important outcomes.

Our teachers this year include:

Daniel Abramson	Maya Liberman
Carly Arch	Elana Paice Lidsky
Alexandra Bergman	Ariella Markus
Dara Dishy	Sandra Merovic
Geri Durbin	Mike Morgulis
Amy Kirsh	Samantha Shulman
Karen Kollins	Sari Waldman
Daniella Lebow	Tali Weiss

Dalia Alalouf, Hebrew Supervisor and B’nei Mitzvah Coordinator

Shinshinim – Israeli Emissaries

Through the congregation’s Israel engagement initiative along with the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, we again have engaged 2 young Israelis, for a year of service prior to their induction into the Israeli army. 2015-2016 marks our ninth year in the program. These individuals are:

- Creative, interesting and engaging
- Active in our schools, creating unique programs at every grade level
- Involved in our schools teaching Israeli culture and society
- Working with Senior School students on issues relating to teens in Israel, culture, “this is Israel” experiences, etc.

- Active in synagogue community life including Family programming, Tot Shabbat service, Family Services, the Schwartz/Reisman Centre, and more.
- Each Shinshin lives with 3 host families throughout their stay, who in turn are more engaged in Temple activities. The host families have many opportunities to meet each other under the auspices of the Federation and with our lay leader, Avra Rosen who has given a tremendous amount of time and energy to this program. We thank Avra for her service to this program. She has given hours of her energy to the betterment of the program and to our young emissaries. We often find that while they are hosting and engaging many of the Toronto area shinshinim, the host families feel a greater sense of community within our synagogue.
- Our partner in this program, Leo Baeck Day School South campus has given us a great deal of support in this program. It has been a pleasure to work together. Hillel Kurlandsky, is the new site supervisor at Leo Baeck along with Cindy Opler, the lay leader are instrumental in the success of the program.

Our 2014-15's Shinshinim, Aviv Naftali and Tal Yitzhaki lived with the following families from Holy Blossom Temple and Leo Baeck Day School:

Jeff and Debra Baker, Stuart Storm and Natalie Witkin, Eric Klein and Gillian Helfield, Tom and Jacque Friedland, Robert and Randi Myers, Eric Beutel and Deborah Siegel.

Our 2015-2015's Shinshinim, Noam Nadler and Bar Cohen live with the following families from Holy Blossom Temple and Leo Baeck Day School:

Nisa and Matthew Diamond, Randi and Peter Satok, Galit and Daniel Samson, Melissa Nutik and Saul Mandelbaum, Dror Balshine and Tamara Sussman, Jonathan Pollock and Sasha Hayward

YOUTH EDUCATION COMMITTEE

A very committed and interested group of educators – parents included are involved in this committee. Three parents have been and will be looking at the recommendations of the Task Force on Education and assist in ways to improve the experience of our students and their families. This group is committed to:

- Engage parents and children together in the ongoing process of Jewish education
- Assist in communication with families; ensuring that email/contact lists for fostering better communication between parents of our students are shared amongst classes
- Marketing/Recruitment and Retention; this remains a very important element of the committee's work. In order to truly be successful we will need to bring in new students to our schools, and ensure retention through Confirmation.

We once again have been chosen by **The Koschitzky Centre of Jewish Education at the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto** to participate in a year-long program, "Institutional Strengthening for Supplementary Schools. The focus this year is on Experiential Education, sponsored through the William Davidson School of Education, a non-denominational program at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Youth Activities

KEF

Our 'after school' program on Sundays, for students in JK – grade 2. Participants can choose from 2 or 3 different activities, which run in 8 or 9 week sessions. Last year we introduced new activities: cooking, and WHIMZ (animals). Both were very successful!

Cooking included recipes related to Jewish holidays.

KEF is now in its 3rd year, and the first session for the current school year is wrapping up at the end of the month. KEF has scaled back to two programs per session. Since Grade 2 students are now in class the full 3 hours, KEF is now offered to JK – Grade 1 students. This year's program choices include cooking (available all three sessions due to its popularity from last year), creative building with Lego, Superscience and WHIMZ animals.

Holy Chag

Holy Chag saw a successful program for Sukkot and Pesach once again. Both programs had a good turn-out, each with some new participants, as well as a good group of student volunteers/madrachim in grades 8-10 who helped with parts of the program planning, as well as running some of the activities.

Holy Chag Sukkot this fall was also successful, attracting several new participants, many of whom were day school kids who are not otherwise involved in programming here at HBT. Teen madrichim were very active in helping run the activities of the day.

YEAH and JVC

YEAH programming has attracted a consistent group of participants, and all the programs last year had great turnout. Once again, several programs were combined with JVC, to maximize numbers - especially those that were offsite and we travelled by bus. Many of the YEAH events had teen madrichim helping out, which was a great addition. The final event of the year was a scavenger hunt at the zoo, where HABSTY kids led groups of younger members around the zoo. It was a great multi-age event, which drew over 20 kids all together to the Zoo.

This year there have already been 2 successful programs that were well attended, and attracted new students who hadn't been to events previously. The next event is scheduled for November 28th – the YEAH Shul-in.

JVC H.O.M.E.: hands on mitzvah experiences for grades 6-8, continued to meet on the first Monday of each month prior to Senior School, to do a hands on mitzvah project (baking muffins for out of the cold, making soup for Bikkur Cholim, etc.). These mitzvah 'experiences' are meant to help students who are preparing for their b'nei mitzvot. Last year for the first time, students who were not enrolled in Senior School participating, which proved a great way for day school students to be connected to youth activities here. The monthly programs were successful, fun, and our Shishinim played a significant role in the program, allowing them an opportunity to bond with our students, and share tzedakah programs and mitzvot experiences and ideas.

The first JVC HOME event took place on November 9th, drawing 25 students – our biggest turnout ever. The students baked 150 muffins which will be distributed to Out of the Cold guests. The next event is scheduled for December 7th.

This year, JVC is partnering with Beth Tzedec youth of the same age, for 2 special programs. The Jewish Service Network will be 2 different day trips to nearby cities, where students will have the opportunity to do volunteer work for the community-at-large, as well as the Jewish community in each location. November 29th in Guelph is the first trip, and the second will be Barrie, in April.

HBTeen Council

Last year, there was an attempt to create a Teen Council, comprised of students who represented all the different pockets of teens we have here at Holy Blossom. There was a little momentum, but no real interest and it didn't go beyond a first meeting.

Over the summer, some CHAT students reached out, expressing interest in trying once again to create a council that would put on a few large-scale teen programs and events throughout the year. There was a very successful first meeting, with 8 students present, representing HABSTY, CHAT students, and others, and a program on Israel Education is being planned for December 2nd.

HABSTY – submitted by Neil Jonatan, President

The 2014 – 2015 year was an overall engaging time for HABSTY. There were seven members who attended regularly and who all served on HABSTY's board. A variety of programs were held throughout the year including the Purim carnival scavenger hunt, the HABSTY scroll, the shul-in, and other more social activities such as the Videogame bus and laser tag.

In addition to the programs, HABSTY mainly functioned through lounge nights every Monday evening after Senior School. These were predominantly periods of relaxing and unorganized peer engagement. Most of the planning for events was done through scheduled board meetings, usually held on the first Wednesday of each month. The year ended off with the Bagel Box Fundraiser, which was a huge success.

The 2015 – 2016 year began with elections in June. Past board members were delighted to see a larger-scale election, which included candidates running against each other.

In late August, a barbeque was held at the youth advisor's home to unite the diverse board members. This was further accomplished in September at the HABSTY executive retreat, which was held at the same time as the grade six retreat.

HABSTY is currently in the process of planning two initiatives. One of the programs is being created through a union between CHAT students and HABSTY known as the HBTeen's Council. The other is a program based on Escape Room.

The current board members are very passionate individuals who are eager to grow HABSTY's membership.

LIBRARY

Until June 2015 the library was open for 7 hours a week. Sharon Singer, our librarian, is a retired Toronto District School Board librarian. As the library has been "packed up" during the renovation, Sharon will complete her experience with us by December 2015. Our library continues to function with books available for borrowing from Room 209. We look forward to our new library facility at the end of the construction.

In the past year:

- Sharon actively reaches-out to various communities within the Temple. Sharon is an active member of Mondays@Temple. She and the library are an integral part of the program for Seniors - taking a mobile cart to the Philip Smith Hall for those that are interested while other members come to the library to take out books.
- Sharon is an active volunteer member of the Youth Education Centre faculty, reading in the Pre-School as well as On Sunday mornings. She leads story-telling sessions for each grade and continues to do so throughout Fall 2015.
- The Sunday Book Club where members join for creative conversations on books of their choice. This monthly program, under Sharon's guidance and facilitation, continues to thrive. New members have joined this year.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH COMMITTEE

Under the direction of chair, Eric Klein, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah committee is organized to engage our congregation and their families in the process of Bar/Bat Mitzvah; looking at the life-cycle event as a process not a one-time event. The current objectives of the committee are: to act as a support to the clergy and temple families going through the Bnei Mitzvah program, to help ensure that the Bnei Mitzvah event is a positive experience for the families, to act as a support to Temple departments who interact with Bnei Mitzvah families including Education and Membership, to act as a support for families who may have special needs, and to be involved with strategic initiatives and policies involving the Bnei Mitzvah program and service. To date, the committee has: regularly provided input to the youth education and engagement committees, created a mentorship program for families, developed minor changes to the service by the clergy including Bnei Mitzvah students reading their Divrei Torah during services and a more personalized approach on the Bimah, and been involved in the Hebrew school parent mingles and community building picnics. Bonnie Goldberg has been especially helpful with these last two items.

We thank the members of the committee for sharing in this effort alongside Rabbi Jordan Helfman who is the lead professional in this process.

Last and certainly not least, I want to express my utmost gratitude to our Director of Education, **Debbie Spiegel** for her ongoing guidance in our Temple's education activities for all.