

JEWISH SPECIAL EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM

NO. 20 Spring 2009

SKY BLUE WATERS COLLOQUIUM 2008

May 19-21, 2008 was a very busy few days for the Jewish Special Education International Consortium as we met in Minneapolis, our host city. The hosting organization was Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis. We greeted Consortium members from all over the United States and spent an incredible two and a half days together learning and networking.

Members of the Consortium gave presentations on their programs and best practices. We used our technology resources to link into two very important presentations from Debbie Gettes of the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education in Philadelphia. Using a phone link and Debbie's PowerPoint presentations we were able to learn about the TAP Teens Program and the Lasko Fellowship Program. Sha'arim, the Twin Cities special education service, gave a presentation on their programs in the day, synagogue and supplemental schools. Jed Luchow of the



Front Row (Left to Right) Phyllis Green, New York; Shelly Christensen, Minneapolis; Sara Rubinow Simon, Washington DC; Shana Erenberg, Chicago; Becca Hornstein, Phoenix; Back Row: Chana Shagalow, Minneapolis; Aliza Koval, Minneapolis; Jed Luchow, New York; Rachel Delman Tumiansky, Baltimore; Diane Brezner, Houston; Jackie Brooks, Cleveland; Terry Feinberg-Steinberg, Pittsburgh; Lenore Layman, Washington DC; Linda Zimmerman, Atlanta; Sherry Grossman, Boston; Ellen Maisloff, Detroit.

Board of Jewish Education in New York gave a presentation on "Differentiating Instruction: A Window into the QAR Model for Asking and Answering Questions." Jed's presentation was a peek into a training program developed by the Special Education Center of BJENY and supported by the NYC Department of Education to introduce teachers to diversifying and differentiating their in-

struction for learners with special needs. Linda Zimmerman of Amit in Atlanta gave a presentation on collaboration along with Margie Earhart of JFCS, Anita Lewis of the Sabes JCC and Ann Hoffer of the St. Paul JCC. Panelists discussed community collaborations in general and specifically as they relate to special needs programs. They shared the details of working in col-

(Continued on page 6)

Jewish Disability Awareness Month

The members of the Jewish Special Education Consortium agreed to support Jewish Disability Awareness Month for February 2009. Ultimately, our members brought the idea to the national movements, the United Jewish Communities and Association for Jewish Family and Children's Agency who supported it by creating materials, designating webspace and promoting it among their member-

ship! Communities throughout North America energetically joined in, and many events were planned within synagogues, schools, agencies, and community-wide. While some communities have been holding Disability Awareness Month initiatives for some time, this was the first time that we were able to achieve such widespread focus on inclusion across the spectrum of Judaism. We are all proud

of our communities, and thankful for the collaborations that made this possible, and are already looking at how to promote Jewish Disability Awareness Month 2010. If you have ideas you'd like to share, please email them to Shelly Christensen at Schristensen@ifcsmpls.org.

Inside this Issue:

Reflections	2
Atlanta, GA	2
Boston, MA	3
Chicago, IL	3
Cleveland, OH	3
Detroit, MI	4
Houston, TX	4
Minneapolis, MN	4
New York, NY	5
Philadelphia, PA	5
San Francisco, CA	5
Scottsdale, AZ	6

About the Consortium

The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education was co-founded by Rabbi Martin Schloss and Dr. Sara Rubinow Simon and is affiliated with JESNA. Marty is the Director of the Day School Education Division of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. Sara is the former Special Needs Department field consultant for the Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington.

As expressed in its name, the Consortium was developed to strengthen special education through central agencies for Jewish education, and to provide a context in which communities' special educators can build a professional network. The Consortium's Call of Action appears on page 26.

The Consortium encourages the North American Jewish community to use the Consortium as a resource. Consortium activities include regular correspondence among members, the Newsletter, the development of a resource database, and an annual Colloquium.

Reflections

*Dr. Shana Erenberg
Becca Hornstein
Consortium Chairpersons*

The Jewish Special Education International Consortium is proud of its accomplishments in bringing the dream of an annual *National Jewish Disabilities Awareness Month* to fruition this past February. Across the country, members of the Consortium held outstanding programs to raise awareness of special needs and inclusion issues. These informative programs were well-received and heightened sensitivity to Jewish special education in a broader population. We commend the Consortium for keeping the importance of special needs in the forefront of Jewish education and in the consciousness of the Jewish community. A list of *National Jewish Disabilities Awareness Month* activities can be found on the Consortium website.

In difficult times like these, we appreciate eve-

ryone's full participation, support, insights, and networking in the advancement of Jewish Special Education. Our Consortium members are truly a cadre of experts, whose knowledge, dedication, and passion have opened doors and created opportunities for meaningful inclusion for Jews with special needs in our communities. Despite diminishing budgets, our Central Agencies for Jewish Education and the Jewish Federations must continue to meet the important need for Jewish education for all children. Surely all Jewish children and adults are entitled to an appropriate and meaningful Jewish education, regardless of disability or need. Together, we can make "Chanoch l'Na'ar al Pi Darko" a reality for all. We urge communities not yet represented in the Consortium to contact us about joining.

Members of the Consortium remain in contact throughout the year via an active listserv.

Through ongoing communication, members have been able to network with one another, offer professional advice, share ideas and practices, and suggest useful solutions to a variety of issues. The listserv provides an expeditious means for members to stay in touch, and facilitates the exchange of ideas that is so crucial for program growth and development.

In the past year, Consortium members began our own website www.jsped.org to serve the needs of teachers, administrators, agencies and others. At the 2009 annual colloquium in Scottsdale, Arizona, the Consortium members will focus on developing materials and resources to be placed on the website for use by everyone.

**"I am only one,
But still I am
one. I cannot
do everything,
But still I can
do something;
And because I
cannot do
everything I
will not refuse
to do the
something that
I can do."**

—Helen Keller

Atlanta, GA

Linda Zimmerman

The Amit Program is a central agency providing support to families of children with special needs in the Atlanta Jewish community. We offer a variety of direct and in-direct services, as well as operate a day school for children with developmental disabilities. Our school is

housed in a typical Jewish day school which allows for inclusion throughout the day into academic and non-academic subjects, whenever appropriate. We are very proud to have received full accreditation this year from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

The Amit Program offers the following educational supports and services:

Preschool Services:

The Amit Early Intervention Task Program is a pilot program which currently serves five Jewish preschools. Speech/Language therapists spend 10 hours each

(Continued on page 7)

Boston, MA

Sherry Grossman

Supporting the education and inclusion of children with special needs and their families continues to be a challenge for the community. The reported number of children with special needs, ages 3 through 18, increased dramatically from 7-10% of the total student population in the 1970's to 15-17% in 2008, with significant impact on the Jewish education system. In this

new environment, the BJE's goal is to provide consultation and training to ensure that all of our schools, congregations, and community programs are inclusive, sensitive, supportive and welcoming. Towards this end, the BJE supports schools and youth groups and develops and disseminates professional resources to create accessible and meaningful formal and informal experiences. Our

goals correlate directly with CJP's goal for creating a welcoming, inclusive community, recognizing its increased diversity.

Current Activities:

Beginning with children at age 3, at the community's Jewish early childhood centers, through high school graduation from synagogue and community school programs, the BJE served for the last 8

(Continued on page 8)

Chicago, IL

Shana Erenberg

Chicago continues to offer a variety of services for individuals with special needs and their families. Numerous agencies are involved in providing services in a variety of settings. While it is true that more children and families are served today than ever before, the needs remain great. Affordable residential options, ex-

panded educational and vocational services, and increased recreational and social opportunities are all priorities. Chicago agencies will continue to move forward in providing an outstanding array of high-quality services, so that the needs of all of our children can be met.

The following information was compiled from Central Agencies for Jewish

Education in Chicago, as well as through the program directors. If any programs were inadvertently omitted, please accept my apologies.

The Anne M. Blitstien Teachers Institute of Hebrew Theological College continues to offer professional preparation programs that lead to Illinois State Teacher

(Continued on page 9)

Cleveland, OH

Jackie Brooks

The Jewish Education Center of Cleveland (JECC) works with schools, congregations and agencies to develop and implement programs that dramatically improve Jewish education in Cleveland. The mission of the JECC is to ensure Jewish continuity in

Cleveland by fostering and strengthening lifelong Jewish learning in various settings and forms. The Special Education Department offers services to students in day schools through SEGULA and in supplementary schools through *Etgar*, and provides in-service training opportunities to special education coordinators

and teachers in the field.

The SEGULA and *Etgar* programs joined with Siegal College of Judaic Studies and the *Upside of Downs* to present the award-winning film, *Praying with Lior*. Two screenings of the film were offered: one for the general public including a telecon-

(Continued on page 13)

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead

**“For every
closed door...
there is one
that is
opened.”**

--Helen Keller

Detroit, MI

Ellen Maiseloff

We are very proud of the growth and depth of our program as we begin our thirteenth year of operation. Our **Opening the Doors Partnership Program** of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit's Alliance for Jewish Education continues to “open the doors of opportunity” so that children with special learning and behavioral needs in our community receive a quality and meaningful

Jewish Education. Our partners are early childhood schools, day schools, congregational schools and, most recently, high schools, across the denominational spectrum—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Humanistic Judaism. Each partnership school receives funding from the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. These funds are used towards the salaries of our Special Educators, each of whom either has

or is working towards a Master's Degree, and towards implementing supplementary services on site. Each school's model of service delivery is specialized to fit its needs and philosophy.

We began our program initially by serving 225 children in 13 schools; we are now helping over 800 children in 25 partnership schools from K-12. This year we were excited to include in our services

(Continued on page 14)

Houston, TX

Diane Brezner

The Jewish Federation of Greater Houston's Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE) offers a variety of programs and services for families of children with special needs.

- Keshet Special Education Classes: Community-wide Sunday School classes for children with learning differences offer stu-

dents the opportunity to learn about their Jewish heritage, customs, and mitzvot in a supportive and enjoyable environment. This year, we have expanded the Keshet class from one to two classes with an increased enrollment to 10 students.

- Jewish Network of

Special Education Professionals meets periodically to share information about strategies implemented in the classrooms to increase successful outcomes for students with learning differences.

- Yad B'Yad (Hand in Hand): a pilot Houston Jewish Commu-

(Continued on page 17)

Minneapolis, MN

Shelly Christensen

Inclusion Retrospective for 2008

In Minneapolis we have been diligently engaged in raising awareness about inclusion. This is one of the reasons I appreciate the work of the Inclusion Committees in our community. These committees keep the fo-

cus on inclusion within their synagogues and organizations, and members have determined that raising awareness is and probably always will be a major component of their charge.

In 2008, Temple Israel Religious School collaborated with the Inclusion Program to develop ability

awareness training in incremental steps starting with Kindergarten. We conducted a one morning training for the students around *B'zelem Elohim*. We integrated alternative ways to pray to God and taught the students the *Shema* in sign language. They, in turn, taught the *Shema* at services to their

(Continued on page 18)

New York, NY

Dr. Jed P. Luchow

The mission of the New York BJE's Special Education Department is to maximize the opportunities of persons with special needs for a meaningful and productive life in the global Jewish and general communities. Towards this mission, the department, through creative programming, continues to advocate, collaborate, coordinate, create, negotiate, evaluate and

educate on behalf of persons with special needs and their families. Below is a listing of new and ongoing developments in conjunction with BJE's Special Education Department. Currently, Rabbi Dr. Martin Schloss serves as BJE's Director of the Division of Day School Education and Dr. Jed P. Luchow serves as the Director of the Special Education Department.

Project SIR: Success in

Reading

Project SIR 1 (grades K-1)

Based on twenty years of special education and reading research, BJE's Special Education Department in conjunction with BJE's Early Childhood Center and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFCS) initiated a reading disability prevention

(Continued on page 20)

**“Who is wise?
He who learns
from every
man.”**

**—Ben Zoma,
Pirke Avot**

Philadelphia, PA

Deborah Gettes

Lasko Fellowship for Teachers in Special Education

The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education is proud to sponsor the second year of the Lasko Fellowship. Last year's program trained 11 directors and special education teachers to conduct turn-around training for their schools. Twenty

three workshops were implemented by Lasko Fellows in nine schools. Each of the Fellows was empowered to become a leader in special education in each of their respective schools. The staff trainings were very well received and staff members continue to request additional training. The first cohort continues to meet to discuss current issues and trends.

The second cohort of the Lasko Fellows includes nine participants from seven schools. Once again they are meeting with great success. This year the program is being replicated in Texas proving that, with effort, that educators can share knowledge and skills and impact the maximum number of people.

(Continued on page 22)

San Francisco, CA

Flora Kupferman

The Special Education program at the Bureau of Jewish Education, established in 1988, continues to address the needs of children with special needs, as well as their teachers, principals, families, and other members of the community. It is funded primarily by a

grant from the Jewish Community Endowment Kohn Fund and receives additional grants for the weekend camp program.

Special education has become integral to some congregational and day schools. Several sites have special education teachers on staff who provide individual tutor-

ing, administer pull-out programs or provide in-class support to students with milder special needs. One congregational school has recently implemented a weekly program for students whose parents requested a self-contained class. They are slowly integrating into larger school activities for

(Continued on page 23)

Scottsdale, AZ

Becca Hornstein

The Council for Jews with Special Needs in Scottsdale, Arizona began in 1985. The agency provides resources and support to children and adults who have a variety of disabling conditions to enable their full participation in the activities of the Jewish community. Using the "single point of entry" approach, the Council provides intake interviews for children and adults. In

collaboration with all of the Jewish groups in greater Phoenix, the Council staff then assists the clients in locating the appropriate resources to meet their spiritual, educational, social and recreational needs in the Phoenix Jewish community.

Special Education: All local Jewish preschools, day schools, congregational schools, camps and recreation programs and

youth groups receive observation, consultation and teacher training to facilitate meaningful and successful inclusion. Adults with special needs also receive assistance in Jewish educational programs.

Social and Recreational Programs: Adults and teens with special needs come together twice a month for social clubs

(Continued on page 24)

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

—William Butler Yeats

SKY BLUE WATERS COLLOQUIUM 2008

(Continued from page 1)

laborative programs including their benefits and challenges and the elements that need to be in place to make them viable. Becca Hornstein shared a video about the residential program in Phoenix and we were thrilled to see Joel in his home.

All participants shared the highlights of their programs over the previous year which inspired all of us to bring some new ideas to our own communities.

After our morning learning sessions, we traveled to meet various local leaders in educational advocacy, service provision and technology. We were special guests of PACER, Inc. a leading parent training and advocacy program that runs over 30 special needs programs from their suburban Min-

neapolis location. Some of their programs are national. We toured the Simon Technology Center and learned about the newest technology available to people with disabilities. PACER is a tremendous resource for any organization working with children and teens with disabilities. Details can be found on their website: www.pacer.org.

We were also guests of West Metro Learning Connections: a Center For Social Skills Development and Support--Helping Kids Fit In. This program provides myriad classes and programs aimed primarily at helping children on the autism spectrum develop peer relationships and friendships.

One of the special treats of the Colloquium was meeting Stacey Dinner-Levin and her husband Mike. Stacey has written

a play entitled "Autistic License." According to Stacey, "This play is based upon our experiences of raising a child with autism - the things that happened in our family that were tragic, surreal and funny. This is the kind of stuff you can't make up! Nobody sees what goes on in families with a child living with a disability. To me theater was the perfect vehicle to tell this story and to give voice to all families living with disability. I really wanted to open the doors, take down the walls of our house and say, 'Come in, take a good look, and see this for what it is: the struggle of my life, along with the beauty and the joy.'"

The play offers a glimpse of what it is like to raise a child "in a world that has far too many opinions on what is 'normal.'" Michael Paul Levin, the playwright's husband, plays

the role of their son who has autism.

We viewed portions of the play followed by a discussion with Stacey and Mike.

Our community joyfully welcomed the Jewish Special Education International Consortium and we were deeply honored to be the hosts for 2008.

For more information on the play or to contact Stacey, contact Shelly Christenson at Tel: 952-542-4838 or Schristensen@jfcsmpls.org

Atlanta, GA

(Continued from page 2)

week on site at their assigned preschool to mentor the teachers in early identification and early intervention. They also provide direct services on a sliding fee scale.

Day School Services:

Amit Learning Labs provide individualized and small group instruction to students with mild to moderate learning disabilities on-site at their schools. Amit staff offer direct instruction, as well as consultation with classroom teachers and after school homework assistance. This program is available to elementary, middle and high schools.

The Amit Gar'inim Program is a modified self contained program for children with developmental disabilities and is housed at The Davis Academy, a Reform Jewish day school. Gar'inim currently serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Students receive individualized and small group instruction in academics and join with their peers in Davis Academy classrooms for all non-academic programming. When appropriate, students participate in academic subject areas as well. Speech/Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Social Skills Therapy are integrated into the school day. The Program will continue to expand adding grade levels each year.

Congregational School Services:

Yad B'Yad provides consultative support and resources to congregations in order for them to better serve students with learning differences.

Madrichim who work in the congregational schools participate in training sessions offered through Amit, to educate them on how to assist all children in the classroom.

Additional Services:

AmitParentNetwork is a virtual support group for families of children with special needs. The AmitParentNetwork was formed, at the suggestion of a parent, as a forum for regular communication between parents.

B'Yachad is a youth program for teenagers with and without disabilities. This youth group meets monthly for social, educational and religious programming. The young adults stay in touch in-between gatherings by visiting, phone calls and email.

Consultation services are offered to the day schools, congregational schools, preschools and families.

The Taylor Family Foundation Parent Seminars provide an opportunity for parents, teachers and other professionals to come together monthly to network and hear speakers on topics related

to raising children who learn differently.

Professional Development is offered routinely by Amit for teachers and prospective teachers. Included in the many topics offered every year are courses related to child development and learning differently.

The Interfaith Disability Network was formed 6 years ago to promote awareness and inclusion in faith communities. This Network is sponsored by the Bobby Dodd Institute and is made up of a Board of Directors that is representative of the diversity of the Atlanta Metropolitan community. Linda Zimmerman is a past president and current board member of this Network.

*Linda Zimmerman,
Executive Director,
The Amit Program
6255 Barfield Road, Suite 100
Atlanta, GA 30328
Phone: (404)961-9966,
Email: info@amitatlanta.org
Web: www.amitatlanta.org.*

Boston, MA

(Continued from page 3)

years as a lead CJP partner in the goal of providing all families interested in quality special needs education with the opportunities to find the services they need. We collaborate with school programs to help each family find the best match for their child (ren). From an original 3 sites in 2001, the BJE has facilitated the opening of 23 new sites to offer some type of special education program in their institution. The BJE distributed thousands of CJP dollars in grants to generate new approaches, materials and programs. The grant requests are reviewed by BJE staff and a highly qualified Special Education Advisory Group, whose recommendations are transmitted to the CJP Disabilities Committee.

Massachusetts and Federal law mandate that all students with special needs receive an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for their secular education. The Jewish synagogues and schools with which we consult are now able to work with families to utilize and adapt these plans to address each child's educational goals. Currently, day school students who are eligible to receive special needs services paid with state and federal funds are transported back to their district of residence for service. The BJE and the JCRC are working with Catholic educators and the state government on a new pilot to bring special needs services directly to students at their day schools.

In the professional development arena, we assist Hebrew College in recruiting candidates for its academic certification program in Jewish Special Education. We convene networks of Jewish special educators from both congregational and day schools; we conduct an extensive Special Needs "track" at the BJE triennial

day school conference. The BJE is a major partner in exploring the issues and challenges of teaching Hebrew to children with special needs; we have disseminated new approaches to second language learning and reading that are applicable to Hebrew in Jewish schools.

The BJE is piloting its new "Parent2Parent Mentor Training Program" to encourage the creation of support groups in congregations for parents of children with special needs. The Parent2Parent Mentor Program, co-sponsored by BJE and Temple Shalom of Newton, provides support to Jewish parents who have children with special needs. Through this program, parents who have just learned that their child has special needs will be connected with a Parent Mentor. The Parent Mentors share knowledge and support to families who are just getting the news about their child's diagnosis.

TeenAde, the Bureau's program for young volunteers who work with kids with learning disabilities in synagogue schools, is a major success. After seven years many of the nearly 75 "alums" chose to pursue academic and professional opportunities in special or Jewish education. The program continues this year with 16 teens working at six sites.

The Unfinished Agenda:

To provide universal, effective Jewish education to families with children with special needs in greater Boston, we can succeed only with a comprehensive, yet unified approach to support parents and programs. More institutions (and their leadership) need to change their policies and approaches; we need more trained educators and more and better teaching materials. We must maintain our political advocacy

strategies, while designing and monitoring pilot programs that test the use of government funds and as the demand grows for more direct remediation services and parental counseling.

Leaving aside issues of potential conflicts of interest, no single agency has the capacity to address this agenda in its entirety. The division of responsibilities currently in place, together with the BJE's community-wide advocacy for the delivery of special education services and the strategic partnerships the BJE has established, have clearly succeeded in getting us where we are now. The distribution of tasks should remain in place, while we continue to convene, collaborate and consult with individual sites and regional centers even as we oversee their work. First and foremost, we need to create a systemic approach and protocol for Jewish early childhood centers and with supplemental congregational and community schools which are primary BJE clients.

The community, through the BJE, must seek out current strategies and tools for those dedicated professionals and paraprofessionals who help children acquire life-long learning skills. The BJE, in partnership with CJP and its partner agencies, must:

- Create a streamlined process that is accepted by the congregations, community and day school programs to provide a comprehensive and realistic Jewish education action plan for every child who has special needs.
- Continue strengthening our community-wide culture of collaboration in Jewish special education, and to bringing our services to the next level.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

As CJP begins to implement its new community wide Strategic Plan, it would be appropriate to engage in a thorough analysis of needs and an effective delivery system to meet those needs. The BJE, Gateways, access to Jewish Education, and Hebrew College

have begun the process to identify gaps and possible overlaps in Jewish special education services. This process should continue.

Sherry Grossman, M.Ed, MAJS,
Director of Special Education
Services
Bureau of Jewish Education
333 Nahanton Street, Newton,

MA 02459
Tel: 617-965-7350
Fax: 617-965-9776
Email: sgrossman@bje.org
Web: www.bje.org

Chicago, IL

(Continued from page 3)

Certification in Elementary and Special Education. The programs are aligned to State standards for teacher education and exceed state requirements in terms of content and rigor. The programs combine intensive courses in Liberal Arts and Science, Judaic Studies, and Education with field and clinical experiences, and culminate with student teaching. Graduates of the program are uniquely qualified as certified educators, capable of teaching both Judaic and General studies. Special Education candidates are qualified to teach the full range of needs that fall within the Learning Behavior Specialist I category, including learning disabilities, behavior and emotional disorders, cognitive impairments, physical disabilities, and autistic spectrum disorders. The education programs offer a high faculty to student ratio and a challenging curriculum taught by experts in the field of education. Current teachers can also take courses to fulfill continuing education and NCLB requirements.

In addition to the education programs, Blitstein Institute offers a variety of second majors, including Psychology, English, Computers, and Business. Blitstein Institute also offers courses in preparation for graduate programs in Speech and Language Therapy, Nutrition, and a variety of other fields. Furthermore, the

school has a strong commitment to serving students with special learning needs. The Writing and Math centers offer ongoing academic support, while the administration and faculty offer guidance and counseling. The Anne M. Blitstien Teachers Institute of Hebrew Theological College is dedicated to the success of all students, and strives to help each one reach her fullest potential.

The Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago has launched the *Makor Or Center*. Hebrew for "source of light" *Makor Or* will address a significant need in the Chicago community: to provide a model of excellence in Jewish education for all students, and to facilitate inclusion for students with special needs in Jewish educational settings. By providing innovative materials and support for religious and day school teachers, students with special needs will receive the instruction they need to succeed. This exciting new endeavor will focus on best practices in universal design and differentiated instruction, and house a collection of Jewish resources for teachers and families, including books, music, games and technology.

Makor Or has trained a cadre of experts in Jewish Special Education to serve as the *Makor Or Consultants*. Having completed a year of an intensive training program, the consultants are now available to religious school programs to provide guidance on

differentiated instruction, best practices in Jewish special education, and to facilitate inclusion of students with special needs. Upon request, *Makor Or* consultants travel to different schools to assist educators, teachers and parents alike in a myriad of support services including planning for individual students, on-site development programs, curriculum and material modification, classroom/behavior management, volunteer training and collaboration and team building. The *Makor Or* consultant group is also involved in presenting workshops to school staff on a variety of educational topics.

The *Makor Or Consultants* group was founded in response to a needs assessment conducted by the Board of Jewish Education and the Community Foundation for Jewish Education which indicates a large number of Jewish children with special needs who were not being adequately served in supplementary and Sunday schools. To date, numerous religious schools have joined *Makor Or*, and the consultants have visited a variety of programs. Their advice and observations have been well-received, as the philosophy of inclusion continues to grow.

February Designated as Jewish Disabilities Awareness Month

For the first time ever, the Jewish Special Education International

(Continued on page 10)

Chicago, IL cont....*(Continued from page 9)*

Consortium has dedicated the month of February to raise awareness about the challenges facing people with disabilities. The Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago (BJE) honored the month with special programming for clergy, educators, teachers and parents. The programs, held at the BJE campus in Northbrook, IL, included:

Sunday, February 1

The Child Who is at Risk: Signs of Learning Disabilities, ADHD, Identification, and Interventions:

Early intervention is critical. How do you recognize it? What do you do? Where do you go? We will talk about the possible causes, signs, and symptoms to watch for and what to do if you think your child has a problem. Connie Parr, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, National President of the Learning Disabilities Association of America. Disabilities Fair to follow presentation!

Sunday, February 8

The Journey to Self Acceptance: Growing Up With a Learning Disability: Mother & Daughter

Perspectives: Growing up with a learning disability presents unique social and academic challenges. This mother and daughter duo will talk about their journey and share their life lessons. Samantha Abeel, award winning author, ("Reach for the Moon" and "My Thirteenth Winter") and her mother, Elizabeth Abeel.

Bring your children!

Sunday, February 15

Everyone Belongs, The House of Worship: Often our buildings are accessible, but there is more work to be done to foster a welcoming environment for people

with disabilities. We will discuss how to create an atmosphere of inclusion for this special community. Cindy Swanson, CMSW.

Sunday, February 22

Effective Teaching Strategies for Students in the Autism Spectrum: Understanding the social, emotional, and academic needs of children in the autism spectrum is the first step to help them achieve their potential. Whether you are a parent or teacher, this workshop is for you. Nadine Woodle, NCSP.

Sunday, February 22

Film Screening

"Including Samuel" film screening followed by a discussion on inclusion with Dr. Shana Erenberg.

The Community Foundation for Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago employs The Kids on the Block program with Third Grade students in the Chicago metropolitan Jewish community to encourage students to talk about differences and to help them realize that being different isn't a negative. This program helps children understand and accept the needs of peers in their classrooms who have disabilities.

During the workshops, students identify, discuss and explore different assistive technology devices that help individuals gain greater independence in their daily lives. Students explore the concept of Kavod (honor) and gain a deeper understanding of the importance of treating everyone with respect.

ELAN is a network of services for children and their teachers and parents. Some of these services include referrals to various outside professionals, including the local Jewish social service agencies, diagnostic services and referrals, and assorted consultations. ELAN consults with most of the Chicago area's day schools. In addition, ELAN is

available to provide consultation and liaison services to families for children facing difficulties in school. ELAN is affiliated with the Associated Talmud Torahs.

The local chapter of **The Friendship Circle** began in September of 2006, offering a wide range of Judaic, social and educational experiences for children with special needs and their families. The Friendship Circle currently has enrolled more than 60 volunteers from 11 high schools. After in-depth training, teenage volunteers are paired with children with a wide range of disabilities. Most volunteer weekly at the home of a child with special needs, to provide friendship and company. "We have found this program to have the greatest impact on our teen volunteers. These students take time from their schedules and make the project a priority, to play with a child with special needs." says Rabbi Zelik Moskowitz, Director of The Stuart I. Raskas Friendship Circle of Illinois. Parents are given a chance to kick up their feet, or tend to the needs of other siblings. Other programs for the children include Mom's Night Out, Children's Circle, Young Adults Circle, and Holiday Events. More information can be found on their web site www.FCIL.org. The Friendship Circle is an affiliate of Lubavitch Chabad.

Gesher HaTorah Day School began in 2005 as a community-initiated response to a profound need. Students who could function well in conventional day schools, as well as those who had severe impairments all had choices for appropriate schools. On the other hand, students with mild disorders and/or a need for intensive therapeutics had no choices for an appropriate Orthodox Jewish education. These students, whose impairments were too mild for the severe-focused institutions but too severe for conventional day

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

schools, were either not in school, struggling in their existing placements, or tolerating public school settings whose values and standards were not consistent with communal norms. An accomplished educational psychologist, an eminent and experienced retired day school principal, and a dedicated and concerned parent worked together to develop a school that would combine substantive Torah and secular education with intensive therapeutic services to address this heretofore poorly serviced population. They were also jointly committed to developing an institution within the community consistent with its religious and educational standards and values.

Gesher HaTorah presently serves 26 students in an environment of very individualized and low operating ratio instruction. In addition, there is a full time staff that provides intensive therapeutics which include occupational therapy, speech/language therapy, and social work. In addition, an experienced exercise physiologist implements appropriate physical education experiences that include martial arts and conventional sports. Aides are also integrated into the instructional work of the classroom, occasionally bringing innovative approaches that augment the work of the teacher. The environment of Gesher HaTorah encourages innovative collaborations between the instructional staff, therapists, and physical education personnel who all work together to accelerate the learning of students. The ultimate goal is to mainstream all students, returning them to day schools when appropriate.

The **Jewish Children's Bureau** is a partner in serving our community, supported by the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation. The **JCFS Therapeutic Day School** is designed to meet the needs of students with behavioral

and emotional disorders and attempts to provide an atmosphere that helps to alleviate these behaviors. In its attempt to address the emotional and behavioral issues of the students, the program offers individual and group therapy as well as individualized and small group special education services. The school operates on the principle that a therapeutic environment for students with emotional, behavioral and learning disabilities requires meaningful participation from parents, mental health professionals, the community and the students themselves. The Therapeutic Day School is accredited and licensed by the North Central Association and the Illinois State Board of Education. In addition to working with the Chicago Public Schools, the school works in conjunction with many suburban school districts from the North Shore, Lake County and the Western suburbs.

The school also offers a *Yeshiva Program* that provides a therapeutic environment for students whose behavioral, social and/or learning problems significantly interfere with their academic work and/or their classroom behavior at other day or public schools. The Yeshiva requires meaningful participation from parents, mental health professionals, the community, and the students themselves. JCFS Yeshiva students live in their own homes and attend school with the involvement and approval of their home school districts. JCFS Yeshiva integrates strong Judaic, secular and vocational programs with an intensive clinical program of day treatment.

Founded in 1999, the **Center for Young Children with Autism** combines the latest innovative therapeutic methods with a strong family component. Serving children ages three to six, the Center is distinctive in its year-round program and full-day schedule of classroom activities and services. The Center for

Young Children with Autism follows the TEACCH method, which aims to build a child's independence and communication abilities. School is in session year-round (215 days a year) and runs 5 hours a day, 5 days a week. There is a small student to teacher ratio, which encourages each child to reach his or her potential. In order to ensure that each child receives comprehensive integrated treatment, the staff includes a full-time speech language pathologist and a full-time occupational therapist. A social worker provides family support and a family liaison / educational consultant provides ongoing education to families, which allows them to generalize treatment methods from school to home. The Center offers assessment, child day treatment, family education and programs, as well as speech, language, and occupational therapy.

The JCFS also offers an *Early Intervention* program, which provides comprehensive therapeutic services for children ages 0 to 3. Services include developmental therapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and developmental play groups. Auditory-Verbal Therapy, which uses specific methods of teaching listening and speaking skills, is offered for children with cochlear implants. The early intervention program includes social work and psychological services, nursing and nutrition, and home visits.

The **Virginia Frank Child Development Center**, a program of the *Glick Center for Early Childhood Services*, offers a continuum of caring, preventive and therapeutic services for children ages birth to six. Virginia Frank operates on the principle that children, families and service providers grow and develop most in the context of reciprocal and supportive relationships. The staff supports the achievement of a child's developmental milestones and promotes

(Continued on page 12)

Chicago, IL cont....

(Continued from page 11)

a strong parent-child foundation. With staff expertise in infant mental health, family systems and developmental theory and practice, the Center's programs prevent the long-term consequences of developmental delays, depression, neglect and child abuse. The Center offers a Therapeutic Nursery and Kindergarten, as well as *Get Together*, an hour and a half drop-in program for parents with children under five.

At **Keshet**, all children are accepted regardless of their background or the nature of their disability. Keshet believes that every child and young adult should have the opportunity to participate in the mainstream of the community. The children of Keshet are integrated, with the assistance of staff, into existing schools and camps alongside their typically-developing peers. Keshet students are continuously challenged to reach their full potential.

Keshet educational programs include the Ariella Joy Frankel Keshet Day School and the Dorf Peer Buddy Mentoring Program, the Dr. Irving A. Hokin Keshet High School and Keshet Transition Program, and the Keshet Sunday School. Keshet also offers a variety of summer programs, including [The Ruben Family Keshet Overnight Camp at Moshava](#) and at *Camp Chi*, the *Keshet Avodah Corps* at Camp Chi, the *Reis Family-Keshet Camp Chi Winter Program*, and the *Special Kids Network Teen Cam*. Keshet provides a variety of young adult recreation programs, as well as the *Jacqueline Besser Special Olympics* and *Joseph Family Buddy Baseball*. In addition, Keshet maintains the *Leventhal Keshet Professional Development Program*, as well as the Keshet International

Network

This past year, Keshet initiated two new programs to serve individuals with special needs. *Ma-Amin*, (currently held at the Ida Crown Jewish Academy) is a specifically designed program for high school students who would otherwise not be able to attend the Jewish high school of their choice. Students are mainstreamed into classes and activities alongside their typical high school peers for the majority of the day while also being given support within the specialized environment of the Ma-Amin classroom.

The Sidney and Lisa Glenner GADOL Program (Giving Adults Daily Opportunities for Living) offers opportunities for adults aged 22 and older to have meaningful lives after exiting the educational system. The GADOL Program offers each participant both a vocational component, known as the *Coe-Worker Program*, and a recreational component. This program enables young adults to reach out and embrace this phase of their lives with meaning.

For additional information about Keshet programs, visit www.keshet.org.

Otzar is a new nonprofit organization founded by a group of professionals with backgrounds in education, special education, developmental disabilities, mental health, medicine, adaptive technology and law, committed to the continual improvement of Jewish educational practices to meet the needs of each student. The organization's mission is to make it possible for each Jewish child, from birth through young adulthood, to learn joyfully to his or her full potential and receive a quality education within Jewish schools and programs in the greater Chicago metropolitan area. This mission is based on the goal of including individuals of different abilities and needs to the fullest extent in the activities of

the Jewish community. Amongst *Otzar's* primary activities are education and guidance for families and professionals on behalf of children, as well as collaboration with schools, organizations and agencies on programs and projects that improve the educational services provided to children in Jewish educational settings.

P'TACH is a special education program for children with learning disabilities and emotional needs. It has two locations serving over 30 children. P'TACH offers self-contained classrooms with individualized instruction for children in first grades through eighth grades. The programs are housed in Arie Crown Hebrew Day School and Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov. Students are included in the regular classroom to the fullest possible extent. The staff is highly trained in special education in both Judaic and secular studies. The children have their academic as well as their social needs met on a daily basis. P'TACH is affiliated with the Associated Talmud Torahs.

The Walder Education Pavilion of Torah Umesorah is committed to the ideal that "all children deserve to be taught in the way that best helps them to reach their potential". From their wing of educational learning centers and games to hands-on projects and interactive bulletin boards, each department is infused with ways to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all students. They are currently developing a Learning Disabilities Department with the help of a learning disabilities resource specialist, a speech therapist, an occupational therapist, and a physical therapist. These specialists are experts in their respective fields and are assisting in the development of curricula that strives for academic success for all children. They maintain a role at the Pavilion to help instruct, guide, and support educators to reach all students regardless of learning

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

styles or challenges.

To assist other educators in bringing out their students' potential, the Walder Education Pavilion of Torah Umesorah, in conjunction with the Associated Talmud Torahs (ATT) of Chicago, and with the financial support of the Jewish Federation and the Foundation for Learning and Development, is implementing the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment Program (FIE) in Chicago-land day schools. FIE is a program based on paper and pencil exercises that help children develop critical thinking skills, social and emotional awareness, and organizational and spatial dexterity. This past summer, over 60 educators from across the United States came to the Walder Education Pavilion of Torah Umesorah to be trained to administer FIE at their respective institutions. FIE technical support is provided by the Pavilion to help participants from across the United States who implement Feuerstein in their communities.

The Pavilion has plans to continue to provide annual FIE training conferences in the summers ahead. The center is currently working on developing a Feuerstein Center to expand the services that FIE can offer to individual children and their families.

Day School Services and Initiatives

In addition to the aforementioned programs, most of the Jewish Day Schools in the Chicago area offer resource and social work services for students with learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral issues. At the elementary level, Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School, Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov Elementary, Yeshiva Tiferes Tzvi, Yeshiva Shearis Yisroel: The Veitzener Cheder and Arie Crown Hebrew Day School are among the schools that offer resource assistance. Hillel Torah also offers accelerated learning opportunities for gifted students. The Solomon Schechter Day School system (Northbrook, Skokie, and Middle School) offers an array of pull out

and in-class resource services. The Akiba-Schechter Day School offers creative programming and levels for students with learning issues as well as for students who are gifted. At the high school level, the Ida Crown Jewish Academy and the Hannah Sacks Girls School offer resource services for students with special learning needs.

Shana Erenberg, Ph.D.
Blistein Institute
2606 W. Touhy
Chicago, IL 60645
773-973-0241
erenberg@htc.edu

Cleveland, OH

(Continued from page 3)

ference question and answer session with Mordechai Liebling, Lior's father. The second was geared towards educators and included a panel discussion with a day school director, a parent of 2 children with Down syndrome (and a special education teacher), and a professor from Siegal College. The sessions were enthusiastically attended. During Siegal College's Chodesh Limud in January and February 2009, SEGULA and *Etgar* once again teamed with Siegal College to offer a mini-course entitled, "Learning with Lior." The first two sessions, led by Rabbi Moshe Berger, focused on readings from the Torah and Talmud pertaining

to educating children with special needs; the third session was led by Rabbi Jeffrey Schein and Rabbi Shawn Zevitt who studied with Lior. The last session, led by 4 educators from the SEGULA and *Etgar* programs, focused on practical issues in the day school and supplementary school environments.

The SEGULA program provides critical support services in the class room that enable special needs students to receive cultural, educational and social benefits of a Jewish day school education. The program has expanded, providing individual adaptation and intervention specialists for 19 students, ages 5 to 18, enrolled in the five Jewish day

schools affiliated with the JECC. SEGULA Intervention Specialists provide one on one adaptation, intervention and socialization skills during Judaic and general studies. Each Intervention Specialist is supervised by an Educational Coordinator. The role of the Judaic and secular coordinator is to be in the classroom one to two days per week to adapt curriculum and tests, provide supervision, and ensure that an effective team is working together to meet the child's needs. The Educational Coordinators have a bi-weekly team meeting to share concerns and brainstorm effective interventions. Training sessions are offered periodically throughout the year for SEGULA

(Continued on page 14)

Cleveland, OH cont....

(Continued from page 13)

staff as well as personnel from the day schools. The *Etgar* program of the JECC provides supplemental religious education to any Jewish student in the greater Cleveland area who is not able to learn in the regular congregational setting. *Etgar* serves 15 students, ranging in age from 7 to 21 years old, from a consortium of 10 area synagogues. *Etgar* classes, led by highly qualified special education teachers, provide the structure, materials and teaching format crucial for a successful religious school experience. Students attend classes according to age and abilities during regular religious school hours.

During the 2008-2009 school year, the JECC assisted two religious schools in implementing resource rooms for students who are included in typical religious school classes but who need extra help in a "pull out" environment. The JECC provided funding for these two resource rooms, one in a Reform synagogue and one in a Conservative synagogue, and for materials, supplies and staffing. *Etgar* staff provided ongoing consulting and support for the resource rooms. These resource rooms will, hopefully, serve as models for other synagogues in the Cleveland area.

In May 2008, *Etgar* students ended the religious school year with a celebration of Israel @60 and a Yom Ha'Atzmaut program using the Attractive Land Map of Israel, and games and activities related to Israel. While the stu-

dents participated in these activities, their parents learned about funding Israel trips and potential travel for their children. In February 2009, *Etgar* students and their families participated in a special Havdalah program where the students made Havdalah kits with an educator from Chabad's Living Legacy program. Students and families also learned Havdalah songs and prayers with a Cantor from a local Conservative Synagogue. Special learning programs are made possible annually by the Bobby Fund of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland.

Jackie Brooks
Etgar Administrator
 Jewish Education Center of Cleveland
 2030 South Taylor Road
 Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118
 Tel.: (216) 371-0446, ext. 215
jbrooks@jecc.org

Detroit, MI

(Continued from page 4)

ATID, a program for local Conservative Jewish teens.

We help children in schools with a variety of disabilities that include: Learning Disabled, ADD/HD, Speech and Language Impaired, Hearing Impaired, Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome and Central Auditory Processing Disorder. The Opening the Doors Special Educators serve as teacher consultants, pull-out teachers, or resource room teachers, who deliver supplemental academic and Bar/Bat Mitzvah support.

Our full range of services include: recruitment, placement, indirect supervision of Special Educators, teacher conferences, direct instruction, consultation, lunch and learn professional workshops and resource center. We are currently working on forging new relationships with colleges around Michi-

gan. We have had conversations with a Special Education Professor, a student working on a Special Education degree, and a Hillel President, about the possibility of students doing preclinical work in our schools. We hope to continue to advance this initiative.

Doors to the Future

We are grateful to be the recipients of a two-year grant from the Mandell L. and Madeleine H. Berman Foundation for the "Doors to the Future" early childhood inclusion program. We are currently in the second year of this grant, which enables us to continue to provide early intervention that will help preschool children have a successful early childhood experience. Our program is based on scientific research which supports the idea that early intervention reduces behavioral, social and learning disabilities.

We currently serve about 20 children who are at-risk and/or have learning difficulties. Four paraeducators are placed into seven early childhood partner schools. This year we expanded the program to provide service in day school preschools as well. We provide our paraeducators with formal coursework at Oakland Schools to obtain paraeducator certification and they are supervised by our Paraeducator Coordinator, Helene Weiss Kohn. Formal evaluation results from parents, classroom teachers and directors, indicate that this service is highly beneficial and a valuable resource. We extend our gratitude to the Berman Foundation for their confidence in and commitment to our program and for enabling us to make a difference in the lives of our young

(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14)

children.

Paraeducator Lunch & Learn Program

This year we continued our **Doors to The Future Lunch & Learn Professional Development Program** for our Early Childhood Paraeducators and trained the paraeducators in how to use our Wiki. The paraeducators also joined the early childhood school directors and educators at our Specialist Series. Our team of 20 Opening the Doors Special Education teachers met quarterly throughout the year to discuss relevant issues and to share current thoughts, methodology and experiences. Our recent speaker was Robyn Glickman, psychologist, and Program Director of Efshar Sunday School. In two workshops, she spoke on *Don't Be Roped In: How to Avoid and Diffuse Power Struggles* and *Life Space Interviews*. Robyn provided practical strategies and advice for the Special Educators to implement with their students.

Efshar Sunday School

Our Efshar program, under the capable direction of Robyn Glickman, continued to expand this year. Efshar provides Jewish education for children with more complex learning, developmental, and behavioral challenges. Individualized and multi-sensory instruction reflecting the needs of learning, development and behavioral challenges contribute to a meaningful Judaic curriculum. Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation, music, crafts, holiday celebrations, drama and family programs are integral components of the Efshar program. After their preparation, students return to their home congregation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Specialist Series

This year we continued to arrange a series of exceptional speakers on the cutting edge special education topics, as re-

quested by our Early Childhood Directors. Topics are selected to provide understanding and awareness of learning strategies and interventions and to help children with special needs or challenges be successful in the classroom.

- Ellen Yashinsky, MSW, Director Clinical Service of Jewish Family Service, spoke on *Delivering Difficult News: Empowering Families*
- Robyn Glickman, psychologist, gave a presentation on, *"Manifestations of Social Anxiety and other Emotional Issues in Early Childhood Classrooms.*
- *Autism the Musical*, the highly acclaimed movie, follows five Los Angeles children with Autism and their parents, as they heroically mount a music-filled drama based on their own extraordinary lives.

Individual School Support for Teachers and Parents

We provide school support for the teachers and staff of various nursery and congregational schools in the community by arranging speakers to present on an educational topic of interest.

- Dr. Daniel Klein Psy.D. P.C.: spoke on the topic of *Childhood Aggression: Why Does it Happen? What Can We Do?* He provided tips and strategies on dealing with aggressive behavior in young children. He also spoke to one nursery school on the topic of *Enhancing Relationships and Building Competence with Special Needs and Challenging Children.*
- Robyn Glickman: spoke on the topic of *Act Don't React: Handling Challenging Behavior with Dignity and Diplomacy.*

Anti-Bullying Policy

The Federation's Special Education Committee, comprised of professionals, Special Education teachers and Federation lay leaders, crafted an *Anti-Bullying Policy* which began to address the methods of confronting and correcting the problems of bullying and harassment. This code of conduct was based on handbooks from the Michigan State Board of Education and local school policies. The directors of each local school agreed to adopt this draft as a universal policy or to adjust it to fit their particular school's needs. This year the *Anti Bullying Policy* was implemented in all of our nursery, day and congregational schools. Other institutions such as the JCC and the Fresh Air Society (a residential camp) are reviewing this policy for possible implementation in their settings. It is our goal that this policy will help our community address the serious issue of bullying, teasing and harassment between children and adolescents.

Exciting news is that our *Anti-Bullying Policy* has gone national. It was mentioned on the Lookstein Center of Bar Ilan University website. Directors from around the United States are interested in hearing how our policy was created and how it was implemented in the schools. Many directors have requested to see a copy of the policy. We are very honored and proud to have received national recognition. To view our policy on the Lookstein Center website, visit www.lookstein.org/resources/brit_kavod.pdf.

Tallit Program

We have continued our pilot project, the Special Needs Tallit Program. This project helps special needs pre-B'nai Mitzvah children in the congregational schools create an individualized handwoven Bar/Bat Mitzvah tallit with their parents' assistance. Many of the students have spoken about

(Continued on page 16)

Detroit, MI cont....

(Continued from page 15)

this unique experience in their d'var Torah at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

Jewish Disabilities Awareness Month

We presented a rich array of programs for February, National Jewish Disabilities Awareness Month.

- We are very excited about our opening program February 8th, a screening of *Praying with Lior*, with Ilana Trachtman. Ilana discussed her experience in producing the film, and how her work and its message impacted many people around the world. Other programs include:
- Ellen Yashinsky, MSW, *Delivering Difficult News: Empowering Families*, February 24th, Adat Shalom Early Childhood Teachers
- Dan Klein Psy.D.P.C. *Using Various Behavioral Techniques to Handle Challenging Classroom Behavior*, February 26th, at 3 Early Childhood Day Schools
- Robyn Glickman, psychologist, *Act Don't React: Handling Challenging Behavior with Dignity and Diplomacy*, February 26th for Temple Israel Early Childhood Teachers
- Screening of *Autism the Musical*, for parents, with a Professional Discussion Panel, February 26th, at Congregation Shaarey Zedek.

We are planning on a community screening of the Hallmark movie, *Front of the Class* in March. We are working on bringing in Jimmy Wolk to speak about the movie, how the role impacted him and

his sincere interest in people with special needs. He portrayed Brad Cohen, an exceptional man with Tourette's syndrome.

We currently have available two original storybooks with guided discussion questions which are used for our 2nd and 3rd graders. Each book was written and illustrated by Julie Schwartz, a Covenant Foundation Intern. These original books, *Hanukah Fever* and *Birthday Blowup*, were written to sensitize children to the needs of their peers with special needs and to promote friendships and discussions on how to include these children in social settings. Volunteer members of our Alliance's special education committee and our special education teachers present them to children in our congregational schools.

This year we made available a new "lending library" of several children's books dealing with various disabilities for classroom teachers to use with students in their classrooms. They ranged from books on Autism to books on learning disabilities. Several special educators also read them to students to increase sensitivity and respect for differences. We have added many new Special Education films and teaching materials to our lending library.

This year we were also proud to co-sponsor Annie Lubliner Lehmann, author of *The Accidental Teacher: Life Lessons from My Silent Son*, during the annual Book Fair at our JCC. Annie wove a tale rich with strategies, wisdom and inspiration for teachers and parents, as she looked back and described the 24 years of raising her son with a severe form of Autism. Her presentation was extremely well received by 100 attendees.

Day School Support

We continue to work with day schools to support their state-mandated services for children with special needs. To supple-

ment the public school services, a clinical psychologist was hired by the Alliance to provide psycho-educational evaluations for those in need.

Day School Conference 2008

On November 17, 2008 over 200 day school teachers gathered at the Birmingham Conference Center for an afternoon of professional development. Our 13th Annual Conference continued to be the only opportunity for all of our five local day schools to come together for a day of learning. We select important cutting edge educational topics of special education interest. Our speaker was Dr. Ross W. Greene, Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and founding director of the Collaborative Problem Solving Institute. He spoke on the topic, *Keys to Resolving Challenging Behavior*. He provided many practical strategies for dealing with challenging behaviors in children, such as meltdowns, inflexibilities, and frustrations. He also spoke about his Collaborative Problem-Solving Approach, which can be easily implemented in both the school and home setting. Dr. Greene's practical and expert advice taught how to create more positive and effective relationships. Dr. Greene is author of *The Explosive Child*, *Treating Explosive Kids*, and his newest book, *Lost at School: Why our Kids with Behavioral Challenges are Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them*. Dr. Greene received exceptional conference evaluations that illustrated that many teachers obtained useful strategies to implement in their classrooms.

Anita Naftaly Family Circle Conference 2008

Dr. Ross Greene also spoke at our Anita Naftaly Family Circle Conference, November 16, 2008,

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

on the topic of *Keys to Resolving Challenging Behaviors* at Congregation Shaarey Zedek. Dr. Greene helped us fulfill our Family Circle mission of assisting parents, teachers, and professionals by providing awareness and understanding of all children, regardless of their challenges and disabilities. Through personal stories and experiences, he offered strategies and interventions for the classroom teachers and parents to use for dealing with many challenging behaviors in children. Over 380 people attended, and were mesmerized by his presentation. They gained an understanding of what triggers challenging behaviors and learned many innovative techniques and strategies for dealing with them. It was a phenomenal program. We were very fortunate to have Dr. Greene speak to parents in a private question/answer session after his keynote presentation. He really addressed the heart of their concerns and parents were very appreciative of his expertise and advice. Parents were extremely impressed and relieved to get an expert's answers to their personal questions.

Wiki

Houston, TX

(Continued from page 4)

nity afternoon inclusion program combining Jewish educational and social programs in a Jewish educational setting. Developed by the BJE, hosted by the Robert M. Beren Academy and underwritten by the FJE Alexander Institute, Yad B'Yad seeks to provide children (ages 7-18) with Jewish programming one afternoon each week within the warmth of a day school mainstreaming set-

Our teacher collaboration and sharing of ideas have reached new heights with the creation of our own Wiki space. The Wiki is a new private space designed for its members to collaborate and share documents, articles, ideas and knowledge; it is also used as a resource for books and professional development opportunities in the community. The Wiki is a way to keep all of our special educators and paraeducators updated on the latest strategies and opportunities in the community, which helps to further the mission of our program.

Meetings

The directors of the various local special education organizations, P'tach, JARC and Friendship Circle, get together to learn about events and programs that are being offered to the people with various disabilities in our community. In this way each director can be kept informed and updated on the various programs being offered.

Through the founding of the Opening the Doors Program and the intervention and support of our special educators, hundreds of children with learning disabilities and other special needs and challenges have been helped

academically, behaviorally and socially. These children and adolescents are able to receive a quality and meaningful Jewish education and lead richer lives as part of our community.

Our Special Education Department consists of: Ellen Maiseloff, Associate Director; Helene Weiss Kohn, Program Assistant; Haviva Ferrier, Support Staff; Tova Britvan, Support Staff; and our 20 Special Education Teachers. We appreciate and recognize the support of our Alliance Director, Rabbi Judah Isaacs. As we enter our 14th year of operation, we are proud of serving our community which continues to be committed to providing quality service and to meet the ever-changing needs in our Jewish school system. We will continue our work... with our eyes and hearts focused on our Jewish children.

Ellen Maiseloff
Associate Director,
Special Education
Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit
Alliance for Jewish Education
6735 Telegraph Road, Suite 370
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301
Tel: (248) 205-2533
(248) 642-4260 ext 376
Fax: (248) 645-7867
maiseloff@jfmd.org
www.jewishdetroit.org

ting.

- Legacy of Learning: a teacher mentoring program for teachers from congregational schools. Upon completion of 24 hours of Special Education Workshops, participating teachers share what they have learned with the faculty and staff of their respective schools. Developed by the BJE and modeled after Debbie Gettes's program in Philadelphia, it is underwritten by the JFS Alexander Institute.

- Consultations are available to teachers, parents and caregivers of children with special needs and to the community at large.
- Teacher workshops concerning special education are ongoing during the year.

Houston's Jewish Community is expanding its programs due to the additional funding from JFS Alexander Institute for Jewish Families with Special Needs. Awareness of special needs in the Houston Jewish community

(Continued on page 18)

Houston, TX cont....

was initiated by the BJE in 2006 with the BJE Special Needs Survey. This survey was encouraged initially by the BJE Consortium of North America. Hats off to all of you who helped this dream come to fruition in Houston.

The following are services now offered in the Jewish community due to increased awareness and funding by the Alexander Institute:

- Information & Referral: Specialists provide families seeking help with information about and referrals to advocacy, education, evaluation, residential, supportive services and other resources.
- Employment
 - o Customized Employment . Professionals, working individually with clients, assess skills and strengths and develop personalized action plans designed for successful participation in the workplace.
 - o Structured Employment. With caring, professional supervision, clients work as a team on specific pro-

jects, learning and strengthening skill sets and workplace behavior.

- Support Group: Facilitated monthly sessions for parents, family members, and caregivers are open to anyone who has a loved one with special needs. Meetings provide lively discussions and an opportunity to connect with others.
- Counseling: Professional counseling for Alexander Institute clients and their families.
- Ma Nishma (What's Happening): A bi-weekly group for high functioning young Jewish adults with special needs, the program provides opportunities for people to connect in a safe and supportive environment and offers emotional support and encouragement to the participants and their families.
- WINK (What I Need to Know): Monthly sessions for parents, family members, and caregivers featuring professional addressing critical and varied topics regarding special needs.
- Social Networking Website: An online place for Jewish adults with special needs to connect in a safe and moni-

tored virtual community. An orientation is required prior to website access.

- Closed captioning services are now available for approved programming.
- Residential facilities are being researched for special needs adults.

The Jewish Community Center, Chabad Outreach, and Jewish Children's Regional Service all have programs reaching out to our special needs children.

I am proud to say that the Houston Jewish Community has made giant steps in beginning to address the issues surrounding our special needs population. I personally thank the Consortium for all the guidance and encouragement given to me over the years to try to "make a difference" in my community. I think the seed has definitely been planted and the future is looking better for us in this area. May we all continue to grow and hope for better things, even in this bleak economy. Times will change. The best to all.

Diane Brezner
BJE Special Education Consultant
 5603 S. Braeswood
 Houston, Texas 77096
 713-729-7000, ext. 334
dbrezner@houstonjewish.org

Minneapolis, MN

(Continued from page 4)

peers in the other grades. We sent materials home with the children so they could tell their parents about what they learned. In 2009, we will train the first graders by building on their kindergarten training and are planning to add subsequent grades until all of the religious schools have curricula on ability awareness.

Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis made ability awareness training mandatory for its staff of over 130 people. Six different sessions were held to accommodate the large number of staff members. The training was multi-modal and interactive and lasted 90 minutes. Staff members commented on how much they learned about having a disability and about society's attitudes

toward people with disabilities. Other agencies will be holding disability awareness training for their staff members in 2009.

A special ability awareness training session was conducted for lay leaders and representatives of our community organizations with the idea that they can schedule this training for their own organizations. Several of

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from page 18)

the organizations have included the training in their on-going inclusion plans.

Camp Training focused on empowering camp staff when working with their entire group of campers. We built in sections about power and the implications of its use, particularly with children who have behavioral issues. Camp staff split into groups and each was charged with discussing how to work with a child when a certain set of behaviors occurs. The goal was to give the camp staff hands-on tools and experiential training. Behavioral expert Dr. Leslie Laub worked with the Inclusion Program again this year to develop and facilitate the training.

Our Liaison Committee, comprised of lay leaders from Jewish organizations in Minneapolis, continued to meet. This year we added a new Orthodox synagogue, Darchei Noam, and the Reconstructionist synagogue, Mayim Rabim. The beauty of this committee is the overall commitment to collaboration and support for each other. Most members are chairs of their own inclusion committees, while our newer members are considering options for their initiatives. It's an exciting time to see the growth of inclusion—to see it really take off—across the Jewish community. Without the support and guidance of the Inclusion Program, a meaningful change in culture and attitudes might be difficult to achieve.

Residential and Adult Services Study

In 2008 we collaborated with the Minneapolis Jewish Federation to fund and support a study to help guide the community regarding appropriate and meaningful support to adults with disabilities and their families in the Jewish community. As with other communities contacted, we are aware that person-centered planning and

self-determination are key factors in any kind of provision of services to adults. As the community voice on behalf of people with disabilities and their families, we have adopted the self-advocacy slogan “Nothing About Me Without Me” as a way to remind everyone that it would be improper to try to address issues without input from the very people who would benefit the most—people with disabilities.

Our graduate intern, Pam Taylor, created an excellent report that highlights the federal and state issues around housing and adult services. The report includes interviews with adults who have disabilities and with parents and siblings. It also provides listings about the programs from other Jewish communities. The Federation's Disability Task Force is in the process of determining recommendations based on the study as well as on input from a wide variety of sources.

Disability Specialist Program

In 2008, we welcomed Nanci Fine to our team as the Parent and Family Disability Specialist. With a master's degree in Special Education and her work experience in the field, Nanci provided immediate support to many families in the Jewish community. Nanci works with Jewish families in areas impacted by having a disability in the family. The service is available for children, adolescents and adults. The response has been very positive; people with disabilities and their family members now have an advocate in the Jewish community who can help them in the public sector (public school, county services, etc.) as well as in the Jewish community. Being able to call Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis (where Nanci works) to find support and help means so much to people seeking assistance. Nanci's position fills an important need in our community.

Inclusion around the World

Jewish communities in North America and Great Britain are using the “Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities” to raise awareness and create inclusion plans that reflect the needs of organizations. Our own Inclusion Program continues to welcome additional local synagogues and organizations to our initiative. In fact, the original five pilot organizations will be reviewing their plans and adapting them to reflect the great achievements over the last two years.

This past year brought invitations to speak on inclusion and to teach communities how to use the “Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities.” Several colleagues in the Consortium, including Jed Luchow at the BJENY and Lenore Layman at the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning in Washington DC, collaborated with the Inclusion Program and with organizations in their communities to provide programming on inclusion. We were the keynote at the 2008 Kinus conference on self-determination and residential services for people with disabilities in Toronto where the theme of the program was inclusion. We are in discussions with other communities for 2009 and 2010 to create inclusion initiatives and look forward to working with them. *Contact Shelly at Schristensen@jfcsmpls.org for more information about our menu of consultation programs and opportunities.*

We look forward to accepting the challenges of 2009 with sincere appreciation for the opportunity to do this work. We will be looking at many low or no cost options for synagogues and agencies. A high price tag need not be attached to inclusion. However, the cost of excluding people with disabilities in our communities is much too high a price to pay.

(Continued on page 20)

Minneapolis, MN cont....

(Continued from page 19)

How do we know that? Just look around your community. Ask anyone with a disability- or ask their family members- how their lives have changed with inclusion in

their synagogue, camp, or school. Ask your rabbi how it feels to look out over the congregation at services and see people participating in prayer using many different modes of communication.

We are only whole when all of us are present in our Jewish communities.

Shelly Christensen, MA
 Jewish Community Inclusion Program for People with Disabilities
 Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis
 13100 Wayzata Blvd. Suite 400
 Minneapolis MN 55305
 952-542-4838

Schristensen@jfcsmpls.org

New York, NY

(Continued from page 5)

project aimed at kindergarten and pre-first grade youngsters in Jewish day schools. The project, a five-year longitudinal assessment and enrichment program, replicates the federally funded research of Drs. Frank Vellutino and Donna Scanlon. Vellutino and Scanlon developed an assessment tool and intervention program designed to detect and correct potential pre-reading problems in youngsters. In a journal article reviewing their research, Vellutino and Scanlon demonstrated that as many as 50% of students classified in fourth grade as having learning disabilities in the area of reading actually had no real disabilities other than, perhaps, poor instruction. Currently, Vellutino and Scanlon along with Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd and Dr. Abraham Tannenbaum, both formally of Columbia University, serve as the project consultants. The project is directed by Dr. Jed Luchow, BJE's Director of Special Education and Associate Professor Emeritus at the College of Staten Island/CUNY.

To promote state of the art reading instruction, Project SIR also sponsors Reading Summits incorporating the latest Research in the field of reading instruction and special education. Drs. Margaret Jo Shepherd of Columbia University, Joanna Uhry of Ford-

ham University and Dr. Eileen Marzola serve as presentation panel respondents as well as the coordinators of the question and answer period. On November 20th of 2003, Project SIR presented its first *Summit on Reading*. The presenters were Drs. Sally and Bennett Shaywitz of Yale University's Center for the Study of Learning and Attention. On November 17th of 2004, the second Summit featured Dr. Joseph K. Torgesen of Florida State University, one of the world's leading researchers in reading and special education. On November 13, 2006, Project SIR's "Reading at the Summit" annual conference featured Dr. Margaret G. McKeown, Research Scientist from the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. Along with Dr. Isabel Beck, Dr. McKeown has co-authored *Building Vocabulary: Developing robust vocabulary instruction*, the leading text in the field for classroom teachers. On January 11, 2006 Dr. Joanna Williams of Teacher's College, Columbia University, began the next chapter in the Project SIR programming by going beyond decoding to the beginnings of reading comprehension. The speakers for 2007 (that took place on March 25, 2008) were Drs. Shepherd and Uhry talking on "The Next Challenge: Integrated Literacy Instruction." On January 8, 2009, Dr. Lydia Soifer of the Soifer Center in

White Plains, NY spoke on "Executive Functioning and its role in Reading Comprehension (grades 3-8)."

Project SIR 2 (grades 2-4)

In order to complete the early literacy development process as described by the National Reading Panel (2000) including phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension, Project SIR expanded its programming to grades 2-4. Project SIR 2 is a three day developmental training program for teachers in grades 2-4 that concentrates on fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension strategies. The assessment tool that Project SIR 2 uses for both screening and progress monitoring is the Diagnostic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

Project SIR and Professional Development

Noteworthy is the fact that Project SIR is currently under contract with the New York City Department of Education through Title IIA funding to provide its three-day Project SIR training programs for teachers of K-grade 4 and resource room support personnel for all non-public school teachers in New York City.

The Jewish Heritage Program (JHP)

(Continued on page 21)

(Continued from page 20)

BJE developed a Jewish Holiday Cycle Curriculum Guide for Individuals with Special Needs for use in congregational programs, informal educational programs, and residential programs for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The Sulam Project

The Sulam Project is a congregational education initiative that addresses special education services in congregational settings in Long Island. Based on a community coalition, a number of congregations collaborated with BJE, FEGS and the National Council of Jewish Women on a joint regional program. The project began with a planning grant from the Long Island regional offices of New York's UJA-Federation. This funding provided ample time to hire a special educator who, together with an advisory committee, assessed the needs of the community and created a consortia-based program. The program focuses on serving a population of children who have various forms of autism and related conditions. The project is currently being monitored and evaluated for replication in other communities.

Association of Jewish Special Educators (AJSE)

The Association of Jewish Special Educators (AJSE) is beginning its 29th year. The AJSE brings together persons with disabilities, parents, teachers, human service providers and other interested parties for the purpose of sharing valuable information regarding special education. During the past 29 years, the AJSE has sponsored numerous conferences, seminars, workshops, and symposia. AJSE maintains a distribution list for dissemination of valuable information to its membership. Five conferences are planned each year by the AJSE Advisory Committee. Topics for these conferences have included:

Autism Spectrum Disorders; classroom management; more effective strategies for general education and Judaic studies classrooms. This year's (2008-2009) program has included: Elise Hahn Felix, LCSW of the Jewish Child Care Association, "Life After High School: Helping students through the Transition Process;" Dr. Eileen Marzola, past president, New York Branch International Dyslexia Association, "Administering and interpreting DIBELS;" and Dr. Lydia Soifer, "Executive Functioning in Reading Comprehension." The March 2009 presentation featured Dr. Mary Courtney, Child Psychologist, "Managing emotions in your classroom: Practical classroom techniques." The final workshop in May 2009 will be Dr. Nina Goodman, Coordinator of Special Services and Hebrew Resource Room Teacher at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School, "Early Hebrew Reading Assessment."

At the May workshop each year, AJSE presents the "Rabbi Dr. Martin Schloss Special Education Teacher of the Year" award to a special education teacher nominated by peer selection. This award is a plaque and cash prize of \$100 (funded by Dr. Jed P. Luchow, previous recipient of the Zella Bronfman Butler Award/UJA-Federation of NY).

Guidance and Consultation

The Special Education Department provides ongoing help to organizations, schools, administrators, teachers, parents and persons with special needs. The Department provides assistance to day and supplementary schools in starting various special education programs, to parents seeking appropriate schooling for their children with special needs, to educators looking for positions, and to government agencies and organizations in their special education initiatives.

Government Relations

BJE staff serves on federal, state and city government councils and task forces representing Jewish special education programs, issues and concerns. BJE advocates for Jewish education interests on the federal level in the US Department of Education's Office on Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) and National Leadership in Private Education. The Department contributed to the development of the regulations associated with Public Law 105-17 (IDEA). On the New York State level, a BJE representative serves as a member of the NY State Education Department's Advisory Panel on Special Education Services and as chairperson for the NY State Education Department's Commissioners Advisory Council on Non-public Education, the NY State Taskforce on Educational Technology as well as on the NY State Board of Practitioners which reviews all innovative programming to meet the new regulations of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. These roles allow BJE to play a significant role in advocating for the needs of the Jewish day schools. This past year, BJE joined Agudath Israel and the Catholic Conference in rewriting NY State legislation as it related to special education services for children with special needs enrolled in private schools at parent choice.

BJE staff also serves on the NY City Committee of Non-Public School Officials. The Government Relations Team participates in developing regulations, distributing government funds and services and advocating on behalf of schools, teachers, students and families. For this past school year, BJE's government relations team was able leverage five and a half million dollars of services for the Yeshivot and day schools in New York City. This included allocations from Title IIA, IID, III and V among other federal and

(Continued on page 22)

New York, NY cont....

state entitlements. In addition to leveraging the entitlements, Judy Oppenheim and Sara Seligson procured state of the art services in staff development, programs, materials and technology. These services include working with Research for Better teaching (RBT), Aussie (a Language program) and Plato (an educational technology company).

Westchester Synagogue Inclusion Initiative

The Westchester Synagogue Inclusion Initiative is a joint pro-

gram of the UJA-Federation of New York, BJE, and Ramapo for Children. The purpose of the initiative is to help synagogues form lay Inclusion Committees following the model described by Shelly Christensen in her "Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion for people with Disabilities." The thrust of the program is to encourage synagogues to more fully engage people with disabilities in the congregation's spiritual, educational, and social programs. A two session seminar conducted by Shelly Christensen and Deb Berman from Ramapo for Children was held in Westchester in April and May 2008 to facilitate lay leaders and clergy. At this time, six con-

gregations are at various stages of establishing Inclusion Committees. UJA-Federation NY is beginning an evaluation of this initiative.

*Dr. Jed P. Luchow,
Director of Special Education
Board of Jewish Education of
Greater New York
520 8th Ave., 15th Floor
New York, NY 10018
Tel: 646-472-5340
Fax: 646-472-5440
luchowj@bjeny.org
www.bjeny.org*

Philadelphia, PA

(Continued from page 5)

A Collaborative Process for Bringing Together Special Needs Agencies

In December 2007, a group of professionals convened from all of the local agencies offering services to people with special needs. The Special Needs Agency Consortium was born and has been meeting regularly ever since. This year we undertook a survey to send to families with a special needs family member. Over 200 surveys were returned. The results of the surveys gave voice to the often sad, angry and frustrated parents. What we learned:

- We must offer programs for the parents of children on the autism spectrum.
- Teens are not included in youth programs (or feel not included) and they are sad and unhappy.
- Day, religious and pre-schools are trying to be supportive, but there are many, many people who are unhappy and dissatisfied.

To read the complete summary of the survey go to:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=0XyCgL1Jbtvevk5Xlo6IIC9XjQXW4kSQmiDimyR99d8_3d

The Consortium worked diligently to plan for National Jewish Disabilities Awareness Month, offering a month of activities and programs for families, parents, teens and people living in Jewish Community Housing.

We are responding to the needs of the families as expressed in the surveys with our agencies collaborating towards that end.

Teen Training Program

Our teen assistant program, TAP, is now in its fifth year. This summer, 19 teens from 11 synagogues spent a full week learning how to be sensitive to, aware of and knowledgeable about special education. This year's TAP teens have proven to be a vocal group of genuine leaders. They take their job seriously and share their knowledge and skills with the teachers.

ACAJE has trained over 100

teens since the inception of the program and the reputation of the TAP program is now known in the community. Parents and teens call to find out how to become a part of the program before the announcements for the program have been made. After the week of training, the TAP teens continue to learn about working with children who have special needs in monthly seminars. The parents of children with special needs are delighted that their children are working with such well trained young people.

Community School Program

This year the community special education program has been revamped with a pilot program. One lead teacher has been hired to work in several schools. Each school contracts with the lead teacher for a certain amount of hours. During the lead's time in the school, she works with that school's teacher and aides to help children who have special needs. She communicates with parents and teachers in the public school to review IEPs and determine learning strengths and weaknesses. For the future, it is

(Continued on page 23)

(Continued from page 22)

our desire to increase the number of special needs teachers and synagogues in which the program operates.

Advisory Committee

The Special Needs Advisory Committee is very active and involved with all of the special needs programs. The committee has been involved in the creation of the Lasko Fellowship program. They review both the TAP and

Lasko applications to help determine who should be accepted into the programs. They are an extremely dedicated and hard working group of individuals.

Deborah Gettes
Mandell Education Campus
7607 Old York Rd.
Melrose Park, PA 19027
215-635-8940
dgettes@acaje.org
www.acage.org

San Francisco, CA

(Continued from page 5)

part of their morning.

The special education consultant spends a significant amount of time working with parents, teachers and principals who are seeking the best solutions for successful educational experiences for their children. The special education consultant also collaborates with individuals in other programs and agencies to provide referrals and other information.

In the past year, the special education consultant participated in a regional community initiative to provide comprehensive services to students with special needs in the congregational and day schools as well as the local JCC. While waiting for funding, the community held Special Needs Awareness Shabbat services on November 21/22, 2008 at five congregations. With the momentum from this successful collaboration, the nine agencies have submitted a joint grant proposal for a Special Needs Day of Learning to be held in the Fall of 2009. Both professional and lay committees comprised of members of all the local organizations meet regularly to ensure that this program is carried out despite other pressing financial and com-

munity needs.

The success of the Special Needs Awareness Shabbat services in the region prompted another local region to begin a community planning process in the area of special needs. The special education consultant works with the lay committee that was established to begin raising community awareness and identify specific directions to pursue.

The Bureau of Jewish Education's *Handbook for Special Education Programs in the Synagogue Schools* continues to be available at no charge. It contains policy statements, procedures for setting up or maintaining a special education program, and forms that can be copied and/or adapted for use by individual schools. To receive a copy, please contact Flora Kupferman or visit: www.bjesf.org/ed_curriculumres.htm#specialneeds

The most popular program we run is the Special Needs Family Camp Weekend. Beginning in 2002, the Weekends are held at a local URJ camp and up to 30 families attend. Structured like a typical Jewish family camp, the weekend features recreation, "no-shush" family Shabbat services, Havdallah, Israeli folk dancing,

singing, arts and crafts, hiking, swimming, paddle boating, campfire, talent show, yoga and more. Counselors and specialists come from many parts of the community and include special educators, adults with special needs and interns from the psychology department of a nearby university. Many people feel so strongly about this program that they volunteer their services. Our campers, who have Autism, Fragile X, Cerebral Palsy, Bipolar Disorder, Down Syndrome and a variety of other developmental disabilities, flourish in the relaxed, accepting, and encouraging environment. Their siblings love not only the camp activities but also the discussion groups we schedule. They are thrilled to spend time with others who share the unique experience of being Jewish and having a disabled sibling. Discussion and play groups have blossomed into lasting friendships. In the camp setting, parents have a peer group, and they find a great deal to share. Structured discussion/support groups, led by therapists or other experts, have become the highlight for many of the adults. Over the past seven years, they have formed a large extended family and they eagerly look forward to seeing each other again at camp and warmly embrace newcomers. Many families

San Francisco, CA cont....

(Continued from page 23)

now celebrate Shabbat, Pesach, Chanukah, B'nai Mitzvah and birthdays together. For the past three years, several of our campers have become B'nai Mitzvah in very moving camp ceremonies, and we expect to welcome another Bar or Bat Mitzvah in June 2009.

In the future we hope to work on setting up a week-long summer camp experience for kids with special needs, to continue and expand the regional collaborative programming and to provide further professional development for teachers.

*Flora Kupferman,
Special Education Consultant
Bureau of Jewish Education of
San Francisco, Marin and So-
nomia Counties
639 14th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94118
Tel: (415) 751-6983, ext. 122
Fax: (415) 668-1816
Web: <http://www.bjesf.org>
Email: fkupferman@bjesf.org*

Scottsdale, AZ

(Continued from page 6)

and continuing Jewish studies classes led by special education teachers. The Yad B'Yad Adult Studies class held a group b'nai mitzvah in 2003. The two groups, Yad B'Yad and Keshet, have become popular volunteer opportunities for typical teens and adults.

Jewish Genetic Diseases Education & Screening: In 2005, the Council began offering an annual Jewish genetic diseases education and screening event for the first time in over 25 years. An aggressive fundraising campaign yielded sufficient funds to subsidize and make affordable the costly tests for the nine most prevalent diseases including Tay-Sachs, Canavan, Cystic Fibrosis and Familial Dysautonomia. The genetic diseases project has become an independent agency with non-profit status, The Jewish Genetic Diseases Center for Greater Phoenix, (www.jgdc.org). Community education continues along with annual screening events.

Shabbat Program: The Council's newest program is "Simchat Shabbat." In response to the frustration felt by many of our clients who have developmental disabili-

ties and find it impossible to sit quietly through a lengthy service, the Council collaborated with Congregation Beth Israel to adapt a Shabbat morning service to meet their needs. The 40 minute service is held once a month and is followed by a 20 minute oneg. The joyous services draw 35-50 participants. The children and their parents have expressed their appreciation for creating the opportunity to pray together with their children (of all ages), secure in the knowledge that they will not be disrupting others or asked to leave the sanctuary. A sturdy, laminated 18 page siddur designed with large type and colorful illustrations offer the chance for everyone to participate in the service.

Disability Awareness: Disability awareness and sensitivity workshops are available to all Jewish agencies, schools, camps and other organizations. The Council's website continues to draw numerous e-mail inquiries from metropolitan Phoenix as well as outside of Arizona and the US.

Residential Program: In 2001, the Council opened its first supervised Jewish residence, Shalom House, for three adult men who have autism or developmental disabilities. Shalom House is also

the meeting place for Yad B'Yad adult social club and continuing Jewish studies class every month. It has become the adults' gathering place for holidays and Shabbat events. Two additional group homes will open in Spring 2009.

The Council receives a small annual allocation from Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix but raises most of its operating budget through an annual fundraiser event, a membership drive and private donations. The agency employs three full-time staff members and a dozen part-time employees.

*Becca Hornstein,
Executive Director
Council For Jews With Special
Needs
12701 North Scottsdale Road,
Suite 205
Scottsdale, AZ 85254-5453
Phone: (480) 629-5343
Fax: (480) 629-5365
Website: www.cjsn.org
E-mail: info@cjsn.org*

Call to Action

In recognition of the obligation to provide a religious education for all Jewish persons with special needs, the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education, in conjunction with JESNA, the Jewish Education Service of North America urges all Jewish communities throughout North America to develop and support systems to:

- Identify Jewish persons with special needs including individuals with developmental, learning, behavioral, neurological, physical, medical, and sensory disabilities;
- Deliver Jewish educational services to special persons that will enrich their Jewish lives and those of their families. Such services include special educational programming in early childhood; day and supplementary schools; continuing adult education programs; and programs in residential, social/ recreational and camp settings;
- Explore various funding sources for the provision of the aforementioned services through federal, state and local government entitlements and foundations as well as local community and private sources.

The Consortium, in conjunction with JESNA, endorses this proactive approach to provide services to Jewish individuals with special needs.

JESNA

Organizational Background

JESNA was created in 1981 by the Jewish Federation system to provide advocacy, guidance, and support for the Jewish community in its efforts to strengthen and improve Jewish education. In the twenty five years since, JESNA has become a leading force promoting consistent excellence in Jewish education through a combination of high-quality community services and innovative initiatives that address Jewish education's foremost challenges. As our community has evolved, so has JESNA's strategic focus of Learnings, Dissemination, and Application of the right programs at the right time for communities across North America. JESNA is now comprised of three key centers of excellence: The Berman Center for Research and Evaluation in Jewish Education, The Learnings & Consultation Center, and the Lippman Kanfer Institute.

Partner Organizations

Virtually all of JESNA's projects are carried out in partnership with other organizations to create synergies that move Jewish education forward most powerfully. JESNA identifies allies who complement our strengths, allowing us to use our assets to maximum effect and to strengthen our partners as well. JESNA collaborates with a wide-range of local and national organizations including federations, central agencies for Jewish education, schools, youth programs, religious movements, Hillels, Foundations and individual funders. While partnering is an important strategy in our work, JESNA is unique in the field of Jewish education. JESNA works to raise the standards of Jewish education across the board, as a system-builder on a national level, as a convener, bringing together the people, ideas, organizations and resources needed to create excellent Jewish education, and as a developer of solutions, generating practical steps toward that will make an impact on every community across North America.

Andi Meiseles
Education Consultant,
Learnings and Consultation Center (LCC)
Executive Editor

Zachary Price
Editor



JESNA
Learnings and Consultation
Center
318 West 39th Street, 5th Floor
Phone: 212.284.6950
Fax: 212.284.6951
E-mail: ameiseles@jesna.org