

YORKTOWN JEWISH CENTER

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL REVIEW

The first half of 5768 (2007) has been an exciting and busy one for the students of the Yorktown Jewish Center Religious School. Here are just a few of the highlights:

AUGUST

School wasn't in session, but the staff of the Yorktown Jewish Center Hebrew school was still busy. We selected a new textbook series for the entire school. We hired a new



school secretary, Mary Gammer, to replace our beloved Mary Sheahan who retired earlier in the year.

And we began a new program to get the students more involved in leading the service, expanding a program run many years ago by Gladys Krongelb a"n. Students are invited to celebrate their birthday by having the honor of holding the Torah during the haftarah reading, and then leading the congregation in Ein Keloheinu, Aleinu, and Adon Olam. This birthday celebration program has been met with much enthusiasm and success by the parents and students, so if you have a student in the school from Aleph through Daled class, please join him or her in services for that special day.



SEPTEMBER



With all the construction still swirling around us on the inside of the Yorktown Jewish Center, we started the year with a warm welcome to the New Year at Sparkle Lake.

Parents, children, and congregants cast their sins into the murky waters of Sparkle Lake. Tradition not only encourages us to find a body of water which contains fish but we even had to share the lake with two real-life fishermen whom we displaced with our inspired and inspiring bread tossing.

In September, we renewed our friendships, greeted teachers we knew, and met our new teacher, Alison Metzgroff, who returned to us after a hiatus of several years. Another new staff member, Howard Kilik, engaged and roused us with enthusiasm and song as our new music teacher. Now every grade gets to sing along with Howard on the piano every week!

OCTOBER



Sukkot gave us another opportunity to enjoy the fresh air, this time in our synagogue's own sukkah. The children provided the decorations, the teachers provided

the instruction, and Sisterhood provided the apples, donuts, and juice. It was indeed the season of our joy as new desks, chairs, and other furnishings filled our classrooms thanks to the generosity of some terrific parents and grandparents.

We ended the month with a moving *genizah* ceremony conducted by Rabbi Sternstein, who reminded us that we don't just toss out our holy books and objects when they become damaged – we bury them with the same dignity and respect they merited when they were used. The children and parents gathered around a large hole behind the nursery school building to say farewell to siddurim, bibles, tallitot, and other things that helped us, served us, and inspired us for so long. The students of the high school helped shovel earth as we heard the rabbi recite the Kaddish.

NOVEMBER

Not only did our music program undergo a transformation this year, but we revamped art as well. While the younger grade teachers incorporated craft projects into their regular curriculum, students in grades daled and higher (middle school and up) met with Avi Zuckerman, an Israeli artist who specializes in helping children create enduring works of beauty and significance. Our first project was a glass Kiddush cup which each student (and some lucky parents) got to design and etch. The two-hour program resulted in some amazing art.



Aleph (3rd grade) parents assembled in the home of Neil and Mara Braverman for refreshments and a presentation by Aleph teacher Elaine Contard. Parents were introduced to the text books their children would be using throughout the year and the goals and expectations of our Hebrew program.

For the students at the other end of the religious school timeline, Rabbi Sternstein initiated a program in the Hei class (7th grade) called PASS the Torah (Parents And Students Studying) which, just as it sounds, has parents reporting to the classroom at 9:00 with their students to learn together with them. The first of six sessions saw nearly every student and parent actively involved in discussion for nearly two hours!

DECEMBER



We lost two of the three Sundays scheduled for December to snow. Somehow, nature was on our side and saved the one remaining Sunday for our school Chanukah party. Students and parents sang, ate (of course!), and schmoozed as the candles of each family's chanukiah burned brightly on festive tables around the room. The school is grateful to Maria Handwerger and our generous Sisterhood for providing the cheerful decorations and delicious nosherai.



The students also had the opportunity to sing a few traditional Chanukah songs around our new outdoor menorah which stands proudly on the lawn facing Route 202. Our previous outdoor menorah was destroyed a few years ago in a storm; Gavriel Weiss decided as his bar mitzvah project to collect funds in honor of his father, Harvey, an active member of our synagogue and past Men's Club president. With the support of many congregants and the whole Men's Club, the menorah shone brightly throughout Chanukah.

COMING IN 2008...

In the next few months, we're looking forward to another visit from Avi Zuckerman (perhaps a mezuzah this time?), some primary class craft projects, and the countywide songfest, the Zimriyah. Aleph will be hosting its Kriat Ivrit presentation as the children show off their newly-gained Hebrew reading skills and the Gimel class is off to a museum. We look forward to sharing these and other exciting events with you in the spring.

Wendy Segal, Head Teacher