



# MACHAR

*The Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism*

P.O. Box 42014, Washington, DC 20015 202 686-1881 machar.org December 2004

## **Secular Humanistic Judaism**

*embraces a human-centered philosophy that combines rational thinking with a celebration of Jewish culture and identity. We affirm the power and responsibility of human beings to shape their own lives independent of supernatural authority.*

## **Machar**

*Is affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism and the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews.*



## **The Machar Sanctuary**

*Donna Bassin*

We're a bunch of smart cookies, we Macharniks. So what do we do now, with election results that make the secular and progressive shudder? I am so proud of our members' well-reasoned election analyses, and grateful to be part of a group where the whole range of ideas is always so compelling. From such sound thinking I derive emotional comfort. Machar has been one big hug through my disappointment over the conservative victory.

We Jewish Secular Humanists of course know we have always been devoted to the most noble of values. So, when we combine sound thinking with good fellowship, even as we lick our wounds, we give each other the strength to continue with our high commitment to a just society. Knowing that the conservative's victory does not make them the sole owner of worthwhile values nor the lone arbiter of how those values should be applied in the public life we all share, Machar will continue to provide our families with activities to act on our commitments. You will see several examples in this newsletter.

Being there for each other and acting on our values are the surest antidotes to frustration over a bad outcome. Though our numbers as a single group are small, our ideas are powerful, and despite how it may seem at times, they are shared by many others.

Indeed, along with us Humanists, many people with faith in a deity have long appreciated that once you peel away varying rituals, certain notions of "good" resonate in all humans, whether one considers them divinely revealed or rationally deduced. People with religious faith may attribute a deity as the source of these intuitive principles. Humanists are likely to say these values come from our rational observation of reality. Either way, it is not what or how you "know" but whether you find fulfillment in doing something about it, and whether you will challenge the many to speak for the few. If it is right to do justice, then it transcends any group's brand of particularism. We then can debate our various interpretations as equals, a status that no election results can change

And in those ensuing debates, we will continue to expose the selective use of "facts" and the redefining of science by those for whom religious fervor trumps reason, and who mean to demonize those with humanistic values. We must continue to propound - out loud and in print - the connection of all that we do in Machar to all that promotes and fulfills those values that recognize the dignity of all human beings.

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*Past President* Phil Gould *At-Large* Miriam Gitler•Ed Goldin•Tom Gordon•Steven Kramer• Larry Rubin•Alex Stein  
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**Rabbi** Binyamin (Ben) Biber. "Dial-a-Rebbe" hours Mondays 8-10pm. Home 301 563 6341. If no answer, cell 301 437 7745. [Rabbiben@machar.org](mailto:Rabbiben@machar.org)

**Jewish Cultural School Director** Larry Rubin **Assistant Director** Diane Hendel **Volunteer Coordinator** Ronni Schwartz  
**Music Directors** Ken Giles•Barbara Gorin **Parent Liaison** Norm Hall **Art Assistant** Herenia Doerr

## DECEMBER 2004 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

When	What	Where
Sunday, December 5	Jewish Cultural School	Jewish Primary Day School
9:45-10:15 am	Music	
10:15-12:15 pm	JCS classes	
10:30 -11:45am	Adult Ed – Peter Wolfe	
	“Zionism from 1918 to 1948”	
	See page 3	
10:30 -11:45 am	Life Issues – To Tree or Not to Tree	
	See this page	
Sunday, December 5	Book Club	Lerdau home
3:00 pm	See page 3	
Wednesday, December 8	Machar Board Meeting	Cedar Lane
Friday, December 10	Shabbat program	Cedar Lane
7:30 pm	secular humanistic service	
8:00 pm	<i>Jewish Washington/Jewish America -</i>	
	Special guests Wendy Turman of the Jewish	
	Historical Society of Greater Washington	
	and Marvin Kranz of the Library of Congress	
	Bring the whole family!	
	See page 3	
Saturday, December 11	Teen Group Hanukkah party	Rodriguez Gitler home
7:00 pm	See page 3	
Sunday, December 12	Hanukkah Party (Hanukkah is 12/7-15)	Schweinhaut Center
9:00-10:00 am	Set up	
10:00 am - noon	Party! Food! Music! Games! See page 4	
12:00- 1:00 pm	Clean up	
Monday, December 13	Health Care initiative discussion	Godden home
7:30 pm	See pages 5 and 8	
Wednesday, December 15	Camp Keshet grant money application deadline.	
	See page 12	
Thursday, December 16	Social Action Committee	Tall/Rubin home
Sunday, December 19	Staffing the Capital Interfaith	
through	Hospitality Network shelter	
Saturday, December 25	See page 3 and 14	
Sunday, December 19	Drama Club	
3:00 pm	See page 3	Willens/Abrams home

The date for this month’s Eastern Philosophy Havurah is TBD. Contact Leon Levenson.

*See Directions on page 17. Phone numbers may be found in our Directory.*

### **To Tree, or Not to Tree, That is the Question!**

Actually, it's just one of many questions that our Machar families may be juggling during December holiday time. You are welcome to add your questions, answers, and ideas in an open group discussion about LIVING HAPPILY WITH HOLIDAYS at our Life’s Issues program **December 5**, 10:30 - 12:00. **Faye Haines** is the facilitator.

### **Peter Wolfe on *Zionism from 1918 to 1948* at Adult Ed December 5.**

The talk will cover the initial attempts to implement the Balfour Resolution, the positions of the British, the opposition of the Arabs, the new immigrations to Palestine, the establishment of Zionist institutions, especially the Labor parties and Histadrut, the rise of Vladimir Jabotinsky and the Revisionists, the impact of change on the Arabs and the rise of Arab Nationalism, the 1929 riots, the Arab revolt, the British reaction and limitation of immigration, the impact of World War II on Palestine, the attempts to settle the Palestine question after the war, the 1948 war, and the flight of the Arab refugees.

### **Shabbat Program Continues with the Jewish Experience in America**

Join us **December 10<sup>th</sup>** (see the Calendar, above) for our service, followed by *Jewish Washington/Jewish America* - a joint presentation of current exhibits by Wendy Turman of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington and Marvin Kranz of the Library of Congress. Your whole family will enjoy this very special presentation.

### **Upcoming Events at the Senior Havurah**

*Harold Black*

On **December 5** at 3 p.m., the Machar Book Club will meet at the home of **Enrique Lerda** to discuss the non-fiction book "Reading Lolita in Tehran." This book is the latest rage for book clubs and gives us a good picture of life in Iran. The book is in great demand in public libraries so most of the members agreed to buy copies. Placing the book club in the Senior Havurah nearly doubled the number of participants.

On **December 19** at 3 pm, The Drama Group, headed by **Deb Godden**, will do a reading of "Tiffany," a play written by two Machar dramatists, **Jules Abrams and Harold Black**, at the home of **Anita Willens and Jules Abrams**.

We have no age limits and there is no fee, so why not join the Senior Havurah today?

### **Teen Group Starts Year with Two Wonderful Events**

The first event of the school year was a Halloween party at **Becky Cohen's** house, where we ate good pizza, discussed how Halloween relates to Judaism, and watched "Big Fish". The second event was November 20th where 8 teens, **Miriam Gitler** (the Machar teen liaison), and I grabbed a bite at Zorba's in Dupont Circle then walked to the DCJCC to see a play called "The Bad Friend." This production, by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Jules Feiffer, depicts a Jewish teenage girl with communist parents growing up and finding her identity amidst the Red Scare. Several of the teens afterward discussed the play with the lead actress in an informal question and answer session.

The next event for Machar teens is a Hanukkah party on **December 11**, 7:00pm at **Ale Rodriguez-Gitler's** home. Machar teen events are a good opportunity for teenage Macharniks to socialize with each other and be more connected to the Machar community post B'nei Mitsvah. For more information about the Machar teen group, if you want to RSVP, or have any questions, please email me at [ramo715@umd.edu](mailto:ramo715@umd.edu) or call me at 410-868-6488.

*Rachel Soronson, Machar Teen Youth Coordinator*

### **Volunteers Needed for Machar's Community Service Program**

Our next opportunity to volunteer at the shelter will be the week of **December 19 to 25**.at the National Cathedral. (See page 14.) If you would like to bring a meal and/or stay overnight, please contact me at [the4cohens@comcast.net](mailto:the4cohens@comcast.net) or 301-654-7702. *Marie Cohen*

# ***HANUKKAH PARTY***

## ***AND HOLIDAY TOY DONATION DRIVE!***

**Sunday, December 12<sup>th</sup> 10 am to noon**

**Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center,**

**See Directions on last page**

**Enjoy latkes, Hanukkah gelt, other food, dreidels, games, music, dancing, and more! If you want to lead a song, dance, or other fun activity, let us know!**

**Please RSVP -- space is limited -- and sign up to bring food or help out at our party. More latkes are needed! Contact *Brenda Platt*, 301-270-0677, [bplatt@ilsr.org](mailto:bplatt@ilsr.org).**

**Also consider bringing a new, unwrapped toy to the party. We will donate toys to Community Family Life Services, which sets up a free "toy store" for homeless and low-income parents to choose gifts for their children. Particularly needed are toys for children aged 12 to 18, although toys for younger ages are fine as well.**

### **Machar Walkers Bring in \$2,000 for CIHN Shelter!**

Almost one hundred Machar children and adults--double the number walking last year--participated in our third annual miniwalk to help the Capital Interfaith Hospitality Network (CIHN). On a gorgeous Halloween afternoon, Machar students, parents and teachers listened to an inspiring talk from Emily Guthrie, Director of Capitol Hill Group Ministries, CIHN's partner in serving homeless families. We then walked for fifteen minutes in the neighborhood.

The registration fees from the walk came out to a whopping \$2,035--twice as much as last year! Moreover, the 94 Machar walkers brought us 94% of the way to receiving \$2,000 in incentive payments from Fannie Mae. With the miniwalks of other member congregations, the shelter actually will receive \$5,000 in incentive payments! Machar members should be proud that our congregation provided over a quarter of the walkers who walked for CIHN (and hence the funds raised), even though we are one of eleven participating congregations and probably the smallest one.

The funds will benefit the Capital Interfaith Hospitality Network shelter, which provides overnight shelter and meals for up to three families throughout the year. What is unique about the shelter is that volunteers provide the meals, eat with the families, and stay overnight on weekends. Many Machar members have volunteered at the shelter and know the importance of this personal contact to the shelter families and to the volunteers.

See more on how you can participate in our work at the shelter on page 14.

## **Machar Pitches in on the *Maryland Health Care for All Initiative***

Do any families in Machar go without health care insurance? Or do any Machar families have to pay so much for health insurance that they must decline it? This is a predicament that hits more families than one would realize.

Machar's Social Action Committee is working to raise public awareness of the need for health care for all. Specifically we are exploring upcoming state health care legislation -- a bill to generate health care for uninsured and low income Maryland residents. A previous bill passed in the Maryland House but failed by two votes in the Maryland Senate, and a new attempt is coming up for another try at passage in the next session.

To that end we are holding an informal discussion meeting with some Maryland state legislators on Monday, **December 13**, at 7:30 p.m. at the home of **David and Deb Godden**.

**Senator Ida Ruben** and **Delegate Sheila Hixson** will be present, and perhaps one additional state delegate from the Takoma Park-Silver Spring area.

You're all invited to take part in the meeting and in other activities we have planned. Please RSVP to 301-891-4944 or to [urbanharto@verizon.net](mailto:urbanharto@verizon.net) to say you will attend and to get directions.

*David Godden*

## **Senior Havurah News**

*Harold Black*

On October 24, nine members attended *Ms. Saigon* at Toby's Dinner Theatre. All agreed that it was a memorable dramatic experience. It left us in tears.

A talk by **Nate Black, Harold and Ann Black's grandson**, on Wednesday November 17 included pictures and discussion of his experiences while living with an Arab family on the West Bank. He went there to study Arabic, but he learned much more. Forty attendees were delighted at the quality of the information. Everyone told us we should be proud of our grandson, which we are.

For information on how to join the Senior Havurah, call Harold Black at 301-469-0865 or E-mail him at [hersh23@comcast.net](mailto:hersh23@comcast.net).

**Welcome to new members Mikhail and Viktoria Belgorodsky**, and son **David Belgorodsky** (Grade K), of Bethesda.

**Thanks to Mitchell and Ellen Rosenthal** for creating our new Friday Shabbat Tzedakah can! It's so beautiful that we'll be motivated to give more!

## **JCS Fund**

Those who attended the last Shabbat Service were able to purchase beautiful scarves, baby hats and outfits, knitted by **Ann Black**. Thanks to Ann's skill and **Harold Black's** successful salesmanship we took in \$110, which Ann donated to the JCS Fund.

## **An Important Contribution on Behalf of Machar Supports the Arts**

Our gratitude to **David and Katie Wittenberg** for making a contribution to have Machar listed as a sponsor of the DCJCC Jewish Film Festival. See page 15.

**Get Well Soon Rick Eisen**, who had additional eye surgery and is doing fine. We all wish Rick continued progress.

## **Dear Machar Members,**

Thanks to Machar for the flowers; and for the get-well cards, visits, and phone calls that Machar members have made. I am recuperating at home now after knee replacement surgery and a stint in rehab, and am getting stronger every day. It's a long struggle, but I am hanging in there. The support that people have given me really helps lift my spirits. I hope to be up and around next month. Thanks again for thinking of me. *Marlem Stein*

## **D.C. Labor Chorus Presents "Evening of Favorite Songs"**

The D.C. Labor Chorus will present a holiday season "Evening of Favorite Songs" at 7:30 pm on Saturday, December 4, in the Auditorium of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies/National Labor College, 10000 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20903. The concert will feature sing-along, songs from many cultures and traditions, and personal favorites of chorus members.

Children are welcome. The D.C. Labor Chorus is made up of singers from many unions in the D.C. area. Our own **Ken Giles** is a member. Admission is free, and contributions will be welcome at the door. For more information call Elise Bryant 301-431-5408

## **Long-time Machar Member Enrique Lerdaу's Translation of *The Clown of Barnow (Der Pojaz)* by Karl Emil Franzos Has Been Published**

by University Press of the South. (ISBN 1-931948-21-6). It carries acknowledgments to **Sherwin Wine, Harold Black and the Machar Book Group**, all of whom had commented on an earlier draft.

The novel, first published in 1904, has a strongly humanist orientation. It describes the struggles of a talented young shtetl Jew to acquire, in secret, enough secular education to follow his vocation, to become an actor. The rigidly orthodox Rabbi, unquestioned leader of the Community, considers this an unforgivable sin. The novel thus is of interest at two levels: As fiction it engages the reader by describing its characters with great warmth and humor and by following a gripping story line. And as a social document it shows powerfully what the nineteenth century proponents of enlightenment for Eastern European Jews were up against.

## **Momentum Dance Theatre's Jazz, Hip Hop Nutcracker**

Duke Ellington's musical version of the holiday classic features talented Washington-area children, including Machar 2<sup>nd</sup>-grader **Camilo Conde!** and teens trained at Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, DC Dance Collective and The Dance Addition of Takoma Park. Joining Momentum's professional company are breakdancers Lionz of Zion. The joint will jump with Ellington's dynamic music, costumes you might not expect and hip hop's energy, rhythms and unbelievable moves. Machar member **Rhonda Shore** is selling tickets. Contact her at [shore828@starpower.net](mailto:shore828@starpower.net), or check out the website:

<http://momentumdancetheatre.com/JHHN2004.html>

Friday, December 10, 8 PM; Saturday, December 11, 8 pm; Sunday, December 12, 3 pm  
Historic Takoma Theatre 4th and Butternut Streets

Saturday, December 18, 3 and 8 pm; Sunday, December 19, 3 pm  
Stuart Hobson Middle School 4th and E Streets, NE on Capitol Hill (near Union Station metro)

Advance ticket prices: \$15 General; \$12 Youth with ID; \$10 Children under 10

## **Machar's Hildie Block to Read at the Writer's Center on December 5th**

as part of the annual faculty reading. They will be reading about 5 minutes each. If you've ever considered taking a Writer's Center workshop, this is a great time to come check out the place and meet some of the faculty. Our Instructor readings give a good opportunity to meet workshop leaders and hear their recent work.

Instructor Reading and Reception Sunday, 4 p.m. \$6; \$4 members. Refreshments and book signings follow the readings.

Block also has a short story out in the new issue of *Gargolye* called "Umbilical Discord" (available at Amazon and Borders, etc.). There is a launch reading for Gargolye at Chapters next Tuesday at 7pm.

Hildie also currently has a couple of personal essays at an on-line political/literary magazine called In The Fray. It's called "Wars Not Between People," and deals with the feelings of immigrants when their new land goes to war with their old home.

[inthefray.com/html/article.php?sid=215andmode=threadandorder=0](http://inthefray.com/html/article.php?sid=215andmode=threadandorder=0)

## **MEMBER PROFILES**

**Jon Desenberg** and **Rebecca Hewitt** are new members of Machar, but both have been attending Machar High Holiday services and Young Adult Havurah events for several years. Jon began attending Machar after growing up and being confirmed as a Humanistic Jew at The Birmingham Temple in Michigan. He also worked and lived on a Kibbutz as part of a Humanistic Jewish Youth Program with Israel.

Jon is a senior consultant with The Performance Institute think tank and Rebecca is a database manager with Jorge Scientific Corporation. They live in the U Street neighborhood of Washington DC.

*-Harold Black*

We would like to extend a warm welcome to **Rhonda Shore** and her son **Camilo Conde**. Rhonda hails from New York and was looking for a Jewish experience free of dogma, having been raised in a secular home (her mother is very active in the Yiddish movement). She found Machar's website, attended a Hanukkah party and High Holiday service, was impressed with the Jewish Cultural School curriculum, and finally took the plunge. Camilo is a second grader at Murch Elementary who is into cartoon drawing and hip-hop dance. He will perform in Momentum Dance Theatre's jazz hip-hop Nutcracker in December. Rhonda works as a senior press officer in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the State Department. Rhonda's husband and Camilo's father Jorge is from Havana. We are delighted that they decided to join us!

*-Renée Weitzner*

We would like to welcome **Dr. Phyllis Hodes** to Machar! Originally from New York, now a neighbor of Mildred and Joe Goodman's, Phyllis is happy to be back in the fold of Humanistic Judaism, having been involved with our movement since its inception with Rabbi Wine in Detroit. Phyllis moved to DC after her husband died to be near her daughter. She enjoys many aspects of Machar including the Senior Havurah. Welcome, Phyllis!

*--Renée Weitzner*

## **Social Action Committee Advances Machar Core Values**

There has been a lot of talk this election year about values, and the kinds of values that are important to us as Americans. Many are equating values and morality with biblical teachings and theistic religious traditions. As Secular Humanists, we see a different set of values and a different type of morality as being important. We see the importance of social responsibility, of looking out for each other, and of fighting for the rights that we consider basic to all humans, like adequate food, personal liberties, the right to education, and the right to competent and quality health care.

The health care debate came front and center in the national campaign this year. There was a lot of discussion about the best ways to reform the health care system given the rising costs and growing number of the uninsured. Through all of this rhetoric and lofty goals, the work of bringing health care to people who don't currently have adequate care has been moving forward on the local and state level rather than the national level.

Machar has become one of the 1100 organizations endorsing the movement towards universal health care in Maryland presented by the Maryland Citizen's Health Initiative/Maryland Health Care for All! This organization has been at work educating the citizens of Maryland and helping to lobby the Maryland Legislature to improve health care coverage for the people of Maryland. There are similar efforts going on across the country, including Virginia and DC, but the Maryland movement has garnered state-wide support and is positioned to substantively improve health care in the state. Here are the issues that the organization is working on:

- Educating the public and lobbying the Governor's office to prevent massive budget cuts proposed to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Getting a bill introduced in the Legislature that would provide adequate health care coverage to the state's more than 700,000 uninsured and 800,000 underinsured.
- Working towards passage of a health care bill increasing coverage to more than 70,000 Marylanders that missed passage last year by two Senate votes!

These may seem like lofty goals, but the fact is that there is much that we can do as Macharniks to move these efforts forward through the type of social action work many of us do in our daily lives and work. These include educating ourselves on the bills to be considered and the cuts being proposed, contacting the Governor's office to let them know how we feel about budget cuts that would eliminate many important preventive health care programs, meeting with our Senators and Delegates in their home districts to let them know these issues are important to us, and organizing trips to Annapolis to lobby our Senators and Delegates in their offices.

These are the tasks that the Machar Social Action Committee will be focusing on to help move the promise of universal health care forward, because this is an issue that is core to our values as Secular Humanists. If you would like more information, contact Marina Broitman at [socact@machar.org](mailto:socact@machar.org) and read more about the movement at [www.healthcareforall.com](http://www.healthcareforall.com).

*Marina Broitman*

# Important Membership Information

By Deb Godden, Membership Committee Chair

**You've had questions? We have some answers! You have more questions after these? Email [Deb@machar.org](mailto:Deb@machar.org), and look for answers in the next newsletter!**

**Q: Why the early dues/tuition deadline** (before school started and before High Holidays)?

**A:** We are a community, but also there is the "business" part of us. As we grow and try to provide more activities and services, the logistical and financial underpinnings become more complex. We have more money both to take in and to pay out, and we want to run the business side of our community in an accountable manner.

We want to be sure that those who are coming as members and sending children to JCS have joined. Some members have arranged to pay in installments. BUT, all members have paid. Now only full-fledged members are listed in the Directory.

**Q: Why did we have to have tickets for High Holidays?**

**A.:** We moved to using tickets so that we could easily and discreetly serve everyone who attended — members, whose admission to High Holidays services is a benefit of membership, and newcomers or guests, who — as non-members — had to reserve and pay for a ticket. Using tickets for everyone made reception run far more smoothly than in previous years.

While we always have provisions for those who need assistance, we are not a "free ride." Just to stay even in what we do, the costs have gone up. For example, our rental costs at Cedar Lane rose 15%. By requiring everyone to have a ticket, no non-member was able to attend and not pay a fair amount, and the dues for those who later joined by November 1 were reduced by the amount they paid for their tickets.

**Q: What is this Machar database?** And why did we have those extra forms to fill out?

**A:** Horribly bureaucratic, isn't it? But the form — unless you move, have more children, or change your birthday or other similar information — is a one-time only. In the future, you will only have to send in a form if your information changes.

We have created a new member information database, which will make all sorts of things a lot easier — once it is filled with your information.

When you see and hear from Roz Seidenstein, who does all and knows all, what it's easy to forget is that Roz works as Machar's Executive Director only a few hours a week, even though, as a Machar member herself, she also volunteers many hours. In addition to Roz, Rabbi Ben is only employed part time by Machar (it's all we can afford). The only other people who get paid are the JCS director and staff, and they, too, are — you guessed it — part time. All the rest of what happens within Machar is up to volunteers — viewers like YOU.

To make the most of Roz and other volunteers, we look for ways to accomplish tasks in less time and in easier ways, and not continue in old, cumbersome ones. Members volunteered many hours to set up our new database, which will help us do many things faster and easier — neighborhood havurot gatherings, directory, etc.

So far, only about half of our members have sent in their membership information forms. And now here we are getting ready to use the database to help create neighborhood havurot, to acknowledge the birthdays, anniversaries and Yahrzeits of members, and to find people who expressed interest in this and that to contact and encourage involvement. And — get ready for it: next year we plan to produce the directory straight out of the database. Think what that means! What if your information isn't in the database?

## **From Rabbi Ben**

*Tol'dot - Gen 25.19-28.9*

*Tales of Isaac, Esau and Jacob*

*Peace with the Philistines*

Delivered at our November 12 Shabbat Gathering

This Shabbat many of us are feeling deeply discomforted by the increasing darkness and coldness of both the physical and political season. The bite of winter is at our doors and last week's elections leave us with many chilling questions. How will the health and future of our democracy be affected by four more years of all branches of the federal government being controlled by one party? How will the culture of our nation be affected by the increase of religious and moralistic conservatism in both major political parties? How can we help move our country and the world toward peace and progress as we face the dividedness and mutual recriminations all around? These and other questions are troubling many of us.

Like other congregations, Machar has several layers of shared values and commitments. We share with other secular humanists - Jewish or otherwise faith in our common human abilities to make progress through the use of our compassion and our reason with which we human beings created the advancements of pluralism, tolerance, mutual aid, and democracy which bring us peace as well as the sciences, arts, and humanities -which bring us progress. Yet Machar also distinguishes itself within our movement by being a group characterized by activism for social change, and by being a group seeking, celebrating, and building on the best in Jewish culture and the best in the cultures of all other peoples.

As Macharniks, we use a range of labels to describe our politics: progressive, liberal, democratic socialist, libertarian, or green. Yet within this diversity of approaches we still share many core values and commitments with each other and with many others in our nation and around the planet. We must keep these shared values in our hearts to sustain us through the setbacks and times of strife we will endure in the years ahead. Likewise, we must come together around our shared ideals here with each other in our congregation and outside with the countless others who also share these commitments to our common humanity.

We can and must support one another by encouraging each other to actively live out these values, by helping each other to take on ever-greater challenges to do the work to realize the goals we share. By working together to do what we know needs to be done we can and must renew our hope, we can and must actively live out our highest values of personal freedom and social responsibility, and we can and must find the inspiration and empowerment to succeed in improving and repairing the world, in realizing our ideals of *tikkun olam*.

Machar is what we make of it. For some it is a place to meet with like-minded people to find camaraderie in a too often cold and dark world. For some it is a place to gather with other free-thinkers to spread the seeds of a new Enlightenment, to water and tend them together as we work to bring the harvests of greater liberty and harmony, the harvests of *mahar*, the harvests of tomorrow.

This week's *parashah*, the traditional reading from the Torah, is called "*Tol'dot*" - meaning "origins," "records," or "story lines." *Tol'dot* is in the middle of the first book of the Hebrew Bible, running from Genesis 25.19 to 28.9 - starting with the birth of Isaac's twin sons, Esau and Jacob, and ending with their coming of age to marry.

There are several interesting elements in this Torah portion. First we find the strange tale of Esau who gives up his privileged status as Isaac's first-born son when he comes in from the field

tired and hungry and asks his younger twin brother Jacob for some of the red lentil stew that Jacob is making. In exchange, Jacob asks Esau to "sell" his first-born "birth-right" -or *b'khorah* - the value of which, in this story, Esau does not seem to understand and so he trades it without a second thought for a bowl of Jacob's red lentil stew.

Esau here is portrayed as a hunter - impulsive and not very bright. Jacob, in contrast, is portrayed as a more civilized man who stays in his tent and cooks, and who is ambitious and deceptive. These traits get Jacob into a lot of trouble in the stories that follow this one. He deceives his old blind father Isaac to get the near-death blessing that would traditionally be given to the eldest son – Esau, here. Yet, Jacob, on his wedding day, is in turn deceived by his uncle. Jacob's ambitions come to little in the end: he leaves his homeland destitute during a famine, is supported for the rest of his life by his son Joseph, and dies in a strange land where his descendants are enslaved.

Of course, Jacob along the way receives the name "Israel" - meaning "one who will wrestle or fight God" - and he is the legendary father and namesake of the 12 tribes or the "children of Israel" / *b'nei Yisra`el*.

There is another element of this week's Torah portion that is of particular relevance on this Sabbath which comes just after the death of Yasser Arafat and just after this week's annual observances of the Nazi attacks on Kristallnacht (11/9/38) and of Veterans' Day or Armistice Day.

We find in Gen 26 Isaac described as having misunderstandings and conflicts with the Philistines, only to later make with them a peace treaty, a *b'rit shalom*, by which they shared a common land and its resources (*b'rit* - Gen 26.28; *shalom* - Gen 26.29 and 26.31).

Today, all those of good will dearly hope that the Palestinians and Israelis, after all their misunderstandings and conflicts, can also come to make peace and to share the one small land they both call home.

Together as a congregation let us once again raise our voices to encourage Israel to move toward peace by affirming the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination, by negotiating in good faith with the new Palestinian leadership, and by removing the military occupation and the settlers. Likewise, we encourage the Palestinians to move toward peace by affirming the rights of Israelis to self-determination, by negotiating in good faith with the elected leaders of Israel, and by ending the violence that they started so long ago that has brought so much death and destruction upon so many innocent people on both sides.

Some of us wish that our two peoples could live together in one bi-national state - such was the dream of Martin Buber, Judah Magnes, and others. Yet most now believe that our two peoples will have achieved what is presently possible if they can just live in peace as two distinct neighboring nations, each with a minority of citizens from the other ethnic group who are afforded full and equal rights.

Even as we bemoan the problematic outcomes of the recent elections, let us renew our commitments to the ideals that have brought us together as a community. Let us also work to renew ourselves and one another by giving to and receiving from one another the friendship and support that make such a cold, dark season as this one a time of ideals and passion and commitment rekindled.

Finally, let us work together to realize the substance of our ideals of peace and progress, of liberty and justice for all.

May it be so.

Let us work to make it so.

Amen.

## **Application Deadline December 15 for Kids' Camp Partial Scholarship**

Machar members wanting to send their kids to our own Camp Keshet for the first time are eligible to be among the applicants for a limited number of \$250 grants from the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington – but applications must be received by December 15.

Camp Keshet, affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism -- to which Machar belongs -- will hold its third season in Ortonville, Michigan, for two weeks in mid July. At Keshet, kids get an exciting, well-rounded experience based on secular Jewish values. Machar kids who have attended report they made life-long friends and that their experience was “cool,” “fun” and “totally awesome” -- more information than they give us about most of their experiences.

The Jewish Federation program is offered through the United Jewish Endowment Fund and is called Camper Quest. It is “designed to engage children in Jewish life, and priority will be given to public school and secular private school children.”

\$250 is available for camps lasting two weeks. The grants are sent directly to the camp.

Applications must be received by Wednesday, December 15, 2004. They are then entered in a lottery. Participants will be notified of acceptance by mid-January

Applications are not based on financial need, but applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Campers must never before have attended a Jewish camp.
- Applicants should be between the ages of 8 and 11, or entering grades 3 through 6 by the beginning of camp.
- Families must live in the greater Washington D.C. area.
- Families must agree to participate in the Camper Quest program. (This involves the completion of surveys and other communication with the Jewish Federation.)

Applications must be submitted by fax to 301/230-7265, by email to [camperquest@ShalomDC.org](mailto:camperquest@ShalomDC.org), or by mail to Camper Quest/Jewish Federation 6101 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD 20852. For an application form or more information about Camp Keshet or the grant, contact Machar Executive Director Roz Seidenstein at [roz@machar.org](mailto:roz@machar.org).

*Larry Rubin, JCS Director*



**Machar...**  
committed to social justice

*Hank Prensley*

Nobody knows Takoma Park & Silver Spring better than Hank!

[www.TakomaHomes.com](http://www.TakomaHomes.com)  
[Hank@TakomaHomes.com](mailto:Hank@TakomaHomes.com)  
301.585.2255

## SHJ Community Service Month to be Celebrated

“Wouldn’t it be a kick if Humanistic Jews across North America worked together as a movement to exemplify our commitment to our ideals?” asked Cary Shaw of his SHJ Communications Committee colleagues at the national board meeting in October. The idea was unanimously adopted by the national Board under the leadership of President Phillip Gould and Executive Director Bonnie Cousens. May, 2005 will be known as *Humanistic Judaism Community Service Month*

“We plan to spread the news that Humanistic Judaism is active in contributing to Tikkun Olam,” said Shaw. “As Jews we believe in making the world a better place, and as humanists we believe it is up to us; we have the power and responsibility.”

As the Committee sees it, most SHJ communities are already involved in community service, but for all to be doing it in the same month would provide a most powerful public statement from which each group and the national movement would benefit. Publicity could be shared and provide more leverage for each other’s efforts.

Although the community service parameters have purposely been left loose since so many groups are already involved in community service, Committee chairperson Lee Mandell, is still suggesting that congregations choose something for May that will be of high human interest and captivating enough to compete for inclusion in national and local news coverage—something such as the current project of the Boca Raton congregation in helping migrant workers recover from Florida’s hurricanes. Whatever the project, it could include all generations in a congregation working on it together.

[Machar already has events planned for that rough timeframe but other Macharniks who have a project to champion with their energy and commitment of time and planning should contact Marie Cohen or Barbara Francisco to clear a date and time.]

*Harriet Maza, Education Associate, Society for Humanistic Judaism*

**CONTEST! PRIZES!** ...if you come up with a name for the **Teen and Young Adult Youth Group**. Something like HuJu or SHFTY (Secular Humanistic Federation of Teens and Young Adults). While you’re at it, design a logo for the group, using the **Humanorah**. Send entries to [ajchalom@yahoo.com](mailto:ajchalom@yahoo.com) or SHJ office, 28611 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48336. **Deadline: January 15, 2005**

### **Teen and Young Adult Conclave April 1-3, 2005**

***DON'T WAIT! REGISTER NOW!***

for the time of your life.

Teens, grades 8-12

College students, ages 18-25

Butzel Conference Center, Ortonville, MI

Cost: \$195, transportation not included

Contact AJ Chalom, Conclave Organizer [ajchalom@yahoo.com](mailto:ajchalom@yahoo.com)

## **Machar's Community Service Program for this Christmas Season**

There are between one and three families (that is, mothers and children) at the shelter at any given time. The shelter rotates between churches throughout the year. During the week of Christmas, it will be on the grounds of the National Cathedral.

We need dinners every night of the week of December 19 to 25. We also need overnight volunteers on Sunday, December 19, Friday December 24 and Saturday December 25. Dinner volunteers bring dinner to the shelter at 6:30 pm. Between Mondays and Thursdays, dinner volunteers can, but do not have to, eat at the shelter with the families, because there is a paid staff person on those nights. On Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, dinner volunteers eat dinner with the families and stay until 8:00 pm, when the overnight volunteers arrive. Overnight volunteers sleep in an enclosed room with a bunk bed. Linens and blankets are provided. There must be a female volunteer sleeping at the shelter, but she is welcome to bring a spouse or partner. Overnight volunteers are responsible for closing up the shelter on the following morning, either at 7:00 am or at 8:00 am at the volunteer's discretion on weekends.

Many Machar members have brought dinner and stayed overnight, and most of these have elected to do it again in the future. If you would like to bring a meal and/or stay overnight, or just want more information or to talk to someone who has done this, please contact me at [the4cohens@comcast.net](mailto:the4cohens@comcast.net) or 301-654-7702.

## **DC JCC Community Service Day December 25<sup>th</sup>**

The December 25<sup>th</sup> Community Service Day is the largest event organized by the Washington DC Jewish Community Center [www.dcjcc.org/volunteer](http://www.dcjcc.org/volunteer).

For the last seventeen years, the Washington DC Jewish Community Center has operated the December 25<sup>th</sup> Community Service Day on Christmas Day, a day when we give back to the community, (this year's event will occur on Friday, December 24<sup>th</sup> since the 25<sup>th</sup> falls on Shabbat). Last year, approximately one thousand volunteers participated in this project. We were able to reach out to over 3,000 people and their families. We also provided respite for staff at social service agencies by working at nearly 20 homeless shelters, 10 soup kitchens, 5 hospitals, 6 youth service programs, 6 health care centers and 10 senior centers. We distributed over 3,000 gifts, served 2,500 desserts and fed more than 4,000 people.

I am writing to you to ask your synagogue to participate in this year's December 24<sup>th</sup> Community Service Day. This year, we are sending over 1,000 volunteer to 60+ social service agencies such as homeless shelters, community kitchens, hospitals, senior centers and residential homes. Your synagogue can choose the type of project it wants to do, and we can reserve a site exclusively for you. As part of the project, we are accepting donations of clothes, new toys and toiletries. Your congregation's members can drop these items off at the Washington DCJCC as of December 1<sup>st</sup>.

I hope you will consider participating in the Washington DCJCC's December 24<sup>th</sup> Community Service day this year. We would also like to send you information by mail, which should arrive shortly after November 1<sup>st</sup>. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 202.777. 3246 or at [Lavinia@dcjcc.org](mailto:Lavinia@dcjcc.org).

For all potential volunteer inquiries, please call the December 24<sup>th</sup> Community Service Day Hotline at 202.518.9400 ext. 565. Online registration for this project will open on October 15<sup>th</sup> at [www.dcjcc.org](http://www.dcjcc.org) tel. 202.777.3246 fax.202.518.9420

## **15<sup>TH</sup> Annual Washington Jewish Film Festival December 2-12, 2004**

For complete info, go to [www.wjff.org](http://www.wjff.org). Tickets on sale Nov. 18. If you try to buy tickets at the door or even the same day you may be disappointed as some of us were last year.

*36 films at 6 venues over 10 days*

The Aaron and Cecile Goldman Theater; Washington DCJCC; 1529 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW

La Maison Francaise, The Embassy of France; 4101 Reservoir Rd NW

The Avalon Theatre; 5612 Connecticut Ave., NW

The National Gallery of Art - East Wing; 4th Street and Constitution, NW

AFI Silver Theatre; 8633 Colesville Road, Silver Spring, MD

The Goethe-Institut Washington; 814 Seventh Street NW

*Films from 14 countries:* Argentina, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA.

Discussions with filmmakers, actors, historians and scholars; filmmakers' works-in-progress; panel discussions: "Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust" and "Mixed Blessings: The Challenges of Raising Children in a Jewish-Christian Family;"

Peace Café following the screening of *Another Road Home*; The Hebrew Hammer DVD-release party; shorts program; children's program with Jules Feiffer.

OPENING NIGHT: *Lost Embrace* - Official Argentinean Submission for Best Foreign Film Oscar and Silver Bear Award Winner at the 2004 Berlin International Film Fest

Thurs, Dec. 2 DC Premiere followed by hors d'oeuvres and sangria reception 6:45 pm

Washington DCJCC's Aaron and Cecile Goldman Theater; 1529 16<sup>th</sup> Streets NW

Reception to follow in the Q Street Lobby. \$20

CLOSING MODIGLIANI NIGHT: DC Premiere followed by Embassy Reception Sun, Dec 12 La Maison Francaise, Embassy of France; 4101 Reservoir Rd NW. \$20

7:15pm Invited Guest: Mick Davis, Director

CATALOGS: Pick up at DCJCC and other Fest locations; download from web beginning Nov. 1 ([www.wjff.org](http://www.wjff.org))

Festival Tickets: \$9 (evenings & weekends); \$6 (matinees - weekdays before 6p.m.); \$1 off discount for seniors & students (except opening and closing nights) Box Office

Tickets: 800-494-8497 or [www.boxofficetickets.com](http://www.boxofficetickets.com)

FEST INFO: [www.wjff.org](http://www.wjff.org) or 202-777-3248

CONTACT: Jennifer L. Katz, P R Director, [301-793-2718/jennifer@wjff.org](mailto:301-793-2718/jennifer@wjff.org)

## **Columbia Jewish Congregation's (CJC) Thirteenth Season of Movies**

*will run from January through April, 2005. Season tickets available in December. Films*

*will include Samy Y Yo (Samy and I)-Argentina (2002); Spanish w/ English subtitles,*

*Divan- U.S. (2003) English/Hungarian/Yiddish; Overture to Glory U.S.(1940) Yiddish*

*with English subtitles; and Heir to an Execution U.S.(2003) English.*

Email [roz@machar.org](mailto:roz@machar.org) for the complete schedule

## **Change in Venue of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Jews in America Event**

The Jewish Historical Society's 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting will now take place at Tragara Restaurant in Bethesda on December 5. A separate date and location for the Exhibition Opening of *Jewish Washington: Scrapbook of an American Jewish Community* will be determined and published at a later date.

## **Yiddish of Greater Washington 2004 Winter Programs**

*Programs are presented jointly with the JCC of Greater Washington and held at the JCC, 6125 Montrose Rd., Rockville, MD, except as noted below.*

Sunday, Dec. 5, Lectures/Seminars entirely in Yiddish with Eugene Orenstein, Canada's most distinguished professor of Yiddish and modern Jewish history.

11 am, *Yiddish Folklore Traditions and Their Pioneering Discoverers*

7 pm, *Warsaw – A Major Center of Yiddish Culture in Pre-War Europe*

Prices for one seminar, \$6 for members of sponsoring organizations, \$9 for the general public; for both seminars, \$10 for members of sponsoring organizations, \$15 for the general public.

Saturday, Dec. 11, 5:30 p.m., Family Chanuka Simcha for children 3 and over and their parents, grandparents, or other relatives. Featuring Chanuka candle making and dreidl playing, with Yiddish songs about these activities, havdola, and a potluck dairy supper. A program of the Jewish Educational Workshop. Free. You must reserve in advance by calling 301-598-2187. Not at the JCC.

Cafe Kasrilevke, Sunday, Dec. 19, 3:30 pm,

JCC of Greater Washington 6125 Montrose Rd., Rockville, MD

Gala Chanuka Concert of Yiddish songs, with Sender Botwinik, arranger, composer and pianist and Richard Lenatsky, tenor, with "a voice like Jan Pierce." Come hear some songs you don't know and some old favorites. Admission \$6 for members of Yiddish of Greater Washington, the JCC, and the Workmen's Circle; \$9 for others.

### **The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington**

#### **December 2, 2004--"Latkes and Vodka" Chanukah Celebration--Bring a Friend!**

Join us for tasty food, great drinks, and a fun atmosphere. Open to Honor Roll households and one guest of their choosing. 7:00 p.m. at the Sixth and I Historic Synagogue, 600 I Street, NW, Washington, DC. *Sponsored by: Affinity Networks Robyn Kurland at (301) 348-7358*

#### **December 12, 2004--SUPER SUNDAY (and December 5-9, 2004--Super Week)**

**A world in change is a world in need--of YOU! Sign up today to volunteer!**

8:30 am.-4:00 pm. at the JCC of Greater Washington, 6125 Montrose Rd, Rockville, MD (Super Week at locations in Rockville, MD and Fairfax, VA)

REGISTER ONLINE AT [www.ShalomDC.org/SuperSunday](http://www.ShalomDC.org/SuperSunday)

#### **December 24, 2004--Community Service Day with the Washington D.C. JCC**

Join our Next Generation group for a meaningful day of volunteering at the Hebrew Home. Relax and unwind at a nearby restaurant after all your hard work!

*Sponsored by: Next Generation Affinity Network*

MORE INFORMATION: Keren Mandell at (301) 230-7286

## **Machar Member Leon Levenson to Present Interfaith Seasonal Plays**

Leon and friends have organized a cooperative called Calliope Theatre Productions. For the holiday season they have joined with the Muslim Community School to present an interfaith program of short plays, *Spirit of the Faiths*. One is Jewish, originally written by Leon for our own Sunday School. The second is Christian, also written by Leon. He claims not to have found any he liked so wrote his own and hopes Macharniks are not offended. The third play was written by a faculty member, Taghi Noktedan, of the Muslim school, explaining the Muslim holiday of Eid, celebrated at the close of Ramadan. The play shows Muslim teenagers explaining the holiday to non-Muslim kids.

The plays are performed by a mix of experienced actors and Jewish, Christian, and Muslim kids.

See the last page for a flier with all of the particulars.

## **Tell and Kvell**

Please let us know about your personal and professional achievements to showcase in the newsletter. Submissions are due by the third week of each month. We do make a distinction between news about our members, and ad copy, however, as the latter is a direct or implied solicitation to buy something. We have a nominal fee to run ads.

## **DIRECTIONS TO MACHAR VENUES THIS MONTH**

*Cedar Lane UU* – 9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, MD.

From DC, north on Wisconsin Ave. (Rt. 355), pass the Naval Hospital, right on Cedar Lane., cross Beach Dr., 2<sup>nd</sup> entrance on right. From 495, Rockville, etc., take Rockville Pike (Rt. 355) S to left on Cedar to 9601. Metro- Red line to Medical Center. Walk ½ mile north on 355, right on Cedar, 0.7 miles, or Ride-On Bus #34 or #35 (ask the driver).

*JPDS* – 6045 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington, DC

Red line to Silver Spring. S-2 or S-4 bus for Federal Triangle to Military Road and cross 16<sup>th</sup> Street.

*Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center* –1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, MD

Georgia Avenue, just north of Wheaton exit off Beltway 495, to east at light at Forest Glen Road and follow past Holy Cross Hospital and Sligo Creek Parkway to parking lot on the right.

*Meetings in private homes* – Call hosts for directions-see Machar Directory for number.

*In case of inclement weather:* Please call the Machar phone number 202-686-1881.

***SPIRIT OF THE FAITHS***

**A Trio of Holiday Plays  
For the Whole Family**

**Presented by**

**The Muslim Community School  
&  
Calliope Theatre Productions**

\*\*\*\*\*

***Mommy Willie's Christmas Angel***  
**A troubled boy learns a lesson in the spirit  
Of his faith**

\*\*\*\*\*

***The Story of Eid***  
**Muslim children dramatize the holiday of  
Eid-al-Adha for new friends**

\*\*\*\*\*

***Hanukkah Gelt***  
**A 19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish family face separation  
As they celebrate Hanukkah**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Performances, Dec. 18, 8 pm, Dec. 19, 2pm  
Adults, \$10, Children 12 & under, \$8  
Muslim Community School  
7917 Montrose Rd, Rockville, MD**

**For reservations, call MCS at 301-460-6713 or Leon Levenson at 301-770-3110  
It is respectfully requested that women and girls wear a head covering**