



## Our Community Seder

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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.

# Community Seder



Rabbi Ben Biber led our warm, lovely community seder on Saturday, March 23. Ian chanted all four of the Four Questions in Hebrew! All enjoyed a fabulous Machar potluck dinner and great conversation. We were honored to again host guests from the Jewish Foundation for Group Homes at our seder."



## Machar Adult Education and Community Sundays

**10:00–11:45 a.m.** promptly, followed by **12:00 p.m.** bagels and Community Sundays for all ages! Programs conclude at **12:30 p.m.**

*The intent of the adult education program is to increase members' access to the best of Jewish and Humanistic practices and perspectives.*

### Jewish Cultural School for children **10:00–11:45 a.m.**

#### April 14

[Jewish Life in Palestine before the State of Israel](#)  
Ami Argaman, Machar Member

Ami Argaman will begin with the story of the arrival of his great-grandfather in Jerusalem in 1888. He will describe the Ottoman system of governance at that time, the structure of the Jewish community in Jerusalem, living conditions, and relations with other communities and with the newly arrived Zionists. He will also discuss the attitudes toward religion, and the system of distributions coming from abroad on which the community depended.

#### **Community Sunday**

Israel and Middle East Peace Day

#### April 21

[We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust \(originally scheduled for May 5\)](#); Ellen Cassedy, Author

Ellen Cassedy will speak on how her personal journey into the land of her Jewish forebears expanded into a larger investigation. Probing the terrain of memory and moral dilemmas, she explores how a country scarred by genocide moves forward. Ellen, a former Machar member, is a journalist whose articles and Yiddish translations have appeared in numerous publications. She will be available to sign her book.

#### **Community Sunday**

Annual Membership Meeting

Please join us for our Annual Membership Meeting on Sunday, April 21, at 11:45, at the Jewish Primary Day School, 6045 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20011.

We will be surveying your opinions about current and planned activities; discussing our plans for 2013–2014 and beyond; and electing our Board members and officers.

#### May 5

[Enhancing US Foreign Assistance by Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#)  
Carla Koppell, Machar member

Carla Koppell is spearheading efforts at the US Agency for International Development Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment to transform the way US assistance serves and empowers women while designing and implementing all aid programs in a gender sensitive manner. She will share with us challenges and priorities for increasing gender equality and empowering women during the second Obama Administration.

#### **Community Sunday**

Focus on women and the book of Ruth (tying in with the holiday of Shavuot)

#### May 19

[Social Action & Tikkun Olam: Humanistic Judaism's Progressive Vision & Challenges](#)  
Rabbi Ben Biber, Machar's Rabbi

Rabbi Ben will discuss Humanistic perspectives on the evolution of the Jewish concept of tikkun olam (improvement of the world). We'll also probe the centrality of social action in Humanistic Judaism.

#### **Community Sunday**

End of year picnic

**Tot Class:** The students listened to the story of Passover. They then each had a turn to find and hide the afikomen. Finally they learned about each item on the seder plate and created their own. Hope you have a great Passover!

—Roxanne Arnon

**K/1 class:** The K/1 class studied Passover. The students read a book about the story of Passover - how the Jews became free after years of slavery in Egypt. We also learned about the Seder dinner, which Jewish families worldwide hold on the first (and sometimes second) night of Passover. Part of the Seder is the search for the afikomen, a piece of matzah wrapped in a piece of cloth then hidden for the children to find, so we set to work creating our own afikomen covers for the upcoming Seder.

We talked about the Four Questions, generally recited by the youngest child. On Passover, it is important that we ask questions about why we do things differently from other nights. But it's also important to ask questions throughout the year, so we set about picking and illustrating four questions about the world that we would like answered. Questions ranged from "why did the slaves exist?" to "why do animals exist?" to "how are waffles made?" to "how do people chop tables?" I hope you and your families have a wonderful Passover! I look forward to seeing you next on 4/14 when we will learn about Yom Ha'Atzmaut and the State of Israel.

—Ben Lauing

**Second Grade:** We had a GREAT class learning about Passover.

An overview of the story of Passover (Moses growing up in the palace, not liking the treatment of the slaves, demanding they be freed, plagues, parting of the sea, wandering in the desert, finding the land of milk and honey.....)

We read the story in a Haggadah at Seder- which means "order" because there are so many special rituals and things to do in order at the Seder.

Reviewed the 10 plagues and the modern plagues which I took from Machar's Haggadah

Reviewed the 4 questions - which was a great way to solidify why Passover is so special

We went over the meaning of each item on the Seder plate and made our own!

We talked about the role of the orange (the fruit) on the Seder plate or table - I had thought it to be a symbol of the empowerment of women, however, the Machar Haggadah discusses that it's a symbol for all minorities. (Once, a Rabbi said "a woman belongs on the Bima, like an orange belongs on the Seder plate," we showed him and now many families place an orange on the table or plate!)

Moses was very important, we discussed Miriam too!

Why do we eat Matzah?

—Amanda Sagarin

**Fourth/Fifth Grade:** I am very excited to be finishing the year with the 4th and 5th graders. During our first class, we studied the roots of Zionism in nineteenth century Europe as well as its leader Theodore Herzl. We also discussed the choice of Israel as a homeland for the Jews and briefly looked at its early history. In our second class, we reviewed the Passover story, the seder plate and what each component symbolizes, and the four questions.

One brave member of the class even volunteered to chant them in Hebrew for us! Finally, we decorated goblets for the students to leave out for Elijah during their seders! In the coming weeks we will continue to study Israel's history, culture, and maybe even its food!

—Chelsea Drumheller

**Sixth Grade:** In my first class with the sixth graders, we got to know one another through a game and then immediately launched into our session on Buddhism. We learned all about Bud-

dha, watched some short videos about the Buddha and Buddhism, and talked about what makes a religion a religion. We then even practiced some yoga! Finally, we created our own 'religions' drawing them out on posters.

In our second class we focused on Passover. We quickly went over the Passover story and practiced the four questions. We then got to know the seder plate - what each item represents and why. We watched a short film about the Seder plate, and then played two games - Jewpardy (Jeopardy about Passover) and Do you know your Seder plate? Finally, we made our own seder plates out of plastic plates, cupcake holders and lots of glitter!

I'm very much looking forward to my next sessions with the sixth graders - at their request we will be doing some projects in Hebrew, including learning how to write our names in Hebrew.

—Hadas Gold

**B'nei Mitzvah Class:** The b'nei mitzvah class gathered towels and blankets to donate to the DC Animal Shelter. Many were collected - thanks to everyone for participating, and a special thank you to Aaron Ferster for bringing everything to the shelter. The class also enjoyed a guest speaker from the Animal Shelter and a wonderful class with Rabbi Ben who taught us all of the common songs and "blessings" for the b'nei mitzvah ceremonies which are quickly approaching.

# Clubs and Activities

## Havurot/Social Events

*Laurie Miller*

We are always searching for volunteers to host events. Hosting is fun and easy. Select your preferred date and event type then sit back and let others bring the food to you. OK, there is a little more to it than that - but not much. If you are interested in hosting or helping to coordinate a Shabbat, potluck, or any other style of event, please contact me at [LAURIE.MILJAZI at gmail.com](mailto:LAURIE.MILJAZI@gmail.com).

## WITs

*Renée Weitzner*

The women of Machar (WITs: Wimmin in Transition) met at the home of Nancy Harris in March. We enjoyed warm conversation and a delightful repast. Thank you, Nancy, for hosting us. This coming month we will be meeting at the home of Harriet Peck on April 24 at 7 pm. All women members of Machar are invited to join us for our pot-luck supper and conversation. Please let me know that you are coming and what dish you wish to bring by April 22, 2013, so that I may let our host know the menu and the number of people who are coming. You may reach me by phone or by email at [rwcats at aol.com](mailto:rwcats@aol.com).

I hope to see many of you at our meeting in April at Harriet's.

## Evening Study Group

*Michael Prival*

The Machar Study Group on Jewish religious texts continues to meet every other Monday evening at my home. We are reading and discussing texts from the Bible, the Talmud, and other rabbinic sources. In this way we are learning not only about the Hebrew Bible but also many fascinating and surprising things about traditional Judaism as it

existed before the Jewish Enlightenment began in the 18th century. All Machar members, at any level of prior knowledge, are invited to join us. If you'd like more information about this study group, please send me a note: [mprival at aol.com](mailto:mprival@aol.com).

## Book Club

*Darlene Basch and Renée Weitzner*

The Book Club of Machar, open to all members, is very pleased to announce a special event. Natalie Wexler, daughter of founding member Henrietta Wexler, will be with us on April 7, 2013, when we discuss her book, *A More Obedient Wife*. Based on historical research and the letters and diaries of the wives of two Supreme Court Justices appointed by George Washington, the book traces the family life of the period in diary and novel form. This is a fascinating, exceptionally written story that one simply cannot put down; it's that good. Please join us on this special occasion. We will be meeting at **3:30 pm on April 7** at the home of Darlene Basch. Please let either Darlene or Renee know if you are planning to come.

The Book Club of Machar will be meeting in May, 2013 (date and place to be determined) to discuss one of the most fascinating studies of the human condition, *Nostramo*, by Joseph Conrad. Set on the coast of South America, it focuses on the silver mining industry and its impact on the people who live there, be they foreigner or native.

If you would like to join us, please contact Renee Weitzner at [rwcats at aol.com](mailto:rwcats@aol.com) or Darlene Basch at [dab0507 at verizon.net](mailto:dab0507@verizon.net).

## Young Adult Havurah

*Liz Pomper*

Join our listserve at [groups.google.com/group/macharyah](https://groups.google.com/group/macharyah) or join our group on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/groups/macharyah](https://www.facebook.com/groups/macharyah) to get the details. YAH events are open to all regardless of membership status in Machar, and participants are encouraged to bring friends who may be curious about our movement.

## Social Action Committee

*Rick Gold*

[Draft Machar Resolution on the DC Patient Protection Act](#)

There is a serious patient care crisis happening in hospitals across Washington DC because of decisions by hospital administrators to not hire and deploy enough Registered Nurses at the bedside. National Nurses United, the largest union and professional association of registered nurses in the United States, has asked Machar to formally endorse its "Heal DC" campaign to pass crucial legislation pending before the DC Council. Called the Patient Protection Act, the bill would impose minimum staffing standards at all DC hospitals so that patients can get the quality care they deserve. The bill's chief sponsor is Chairman Phil Mendelson. Nine other Council members have signed on as well. In addition, over 25 organizations have announced their support for this campaign.

Machar's Social Action Committee has proposed for approval the following resolution:

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## RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

### PATIENT PROTECTION ACT

WHEREAS, the health and safety of patients are endangered by unsafe staffing levels in the District of Columbia hospitals, creating a public health crisis;

WHEREAS, inadequate nurse staffing leads to preventable hospital-acquired infections, falls and injuries, pressure sores and other negative medical outcomes, as well as hospital readmissions;

WHEREAS, District hospitals stand to lose millions of dollars in federal funding due to poor patient outcomes;

WHEREAS, registered nurse burnout and poor working conditions have led to a sizable turnover of nurses in the city's hospitals, which deprives patients of experienced, trained nurses and is very costly;

WHEREAS, residents of the District of Columbia are deserving of the highest standards of hospital care;

WHEREAS, registered nurses have a duty to advocate in the exclusive interests of patients;

WHEREAS, clinical research demonstrates that higher nurse staffing levels result in better patient outcomes and fewer patient deaths;

WHEREAS, mandatory, minimum, nurse-to-patient ratios have been proven to save lives and improve patient outcomes in California where such ratios are mandated by statute and have been shown to be a cost-effective solution for hospitals;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Machar endorses the Patient Protection Act of 2013, sponsored by Chairman Phil Mendelson and nine other members of the District of Columbia Council, which would protect patients by mandating safe nurse staffing in the hospitals of the District of Columbia, provide whistle-blower protection for nurse and other hospital staff, and prohibit mandatory nurse overtime which causes medical errors. We will so inform the Council of the District of Columbia, Mayor Gray, our members and the public of our support for this important campaign and encourage their support.

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According to Machar's by-laws, such a resolution requires board support and the opportunity for Machar members to provide comments before final board consideration. Board members have indicated their support for the resolution. Members are encouraged to share their comments on the resolution to [rickgold at mindspring.com](mailto:rickgold@mindspring.com) before the next board meeting on April 11.

If the resolution is approved, the Social Action Committee plans to send a letter in the name of Machar to every member of the city council and the Mayor urging support for the bill. We will ask Machar members to write similar letters, including any stories of how they were impacted by an inadequate number of nurses. We will organize a Machar delegation at a rally for safe patient care at Freedom Plaza on **Friday, April 19 at 5:30 p.m.** Once the DC Council Health Committee holds a hearing, we will seek the participation of Machar members.

## Machar March Board of Directors Highlights

*Joyce Rosenthal*

- The board has agreed to use JPDS again next year for JCS, and also to continue with most of the other current venues (including Cedar Lane Unitarian Church for board meetings and High Holiday services, and the Schweinhaut Center for parties).
- Several informal board committees are looking into issues surrounding the member dues structure, as well as whether Machar should continue using paper tickets for High Holidays services, or use an email ticket system instead.

the D.C. Jewish Community Presents

# A Special Elections Debate

Hosting Candidates for the City Council At-Large Seat



## Tuesday, April 9th

## 8:00 pm - 9:30 pm

at the Washington DC Jewish Community Center  
1529 16th Street, NW

Learn about the issues on the ballot for the April 23rd Special Election.  
Meet the candidates, hear them respond to key concerns of the Jewish community  
and most importantly YOUR QUESTIONS!

**Details & Registration at [www.jcouncil.org/DCDebate](http://www.jcouncil.org/DCDebate)**

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Greater Washington, as the government and community relations arm for over 100 synagogues and Jewish agencies in our region, hosts candidate debates and voter education events. All programs are non-partisan and all candidates have been offered equal opportunity to participate in our program. JCRC is joined by the following organizations in supporting this program: D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, Defeat Poverty - DC, the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, Jews United For Justice, Keshet Israel, the Washington DC Jewish Community Center, Washington Hebrew Congregation. Want to list your Jewish agency or synagogue as a supporting organization? Contact Debra Linick [dlinick@jcouncil.org](mailto:dlinick@jcouncil.org) / 202-552-5355



# NATHAN PHELPS

Ex-Westboro Baptist Church Member

*On Religion, LGBT Rights, and Child Abuse*

Monday,  
April 8<sup>th</sup> at  
8:00pm in  
the *Grand  
Ballroom* of  
the George  
Washington  
University



*EX-Westboro Baptist Church Member, Nathan Phelps*

*Doors open at 8:00pm*

*Marvin Center Grand Ballroom*

*800 21st St NW, Washington, DC 20052*

Admission is free.  
Seats are first come-  
first serve.

Nate Phelps is the son of Pastor Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church, which gained infamy from their protests at soldiers' funerals around the United States. He is the sixth of thirteen children, and was taught his father's extreme version of Calvinism from an early age. This was accompanied by extreme physical punishments and abuse, extreme dietary and health requirements, and other extreme expectations.

Nate left home at midnight on his eighteenth birthday, and moved to California where he built a new life away from his family. He only recently began speaking out about his story.

He is a vocal LGBT advocate, and speaks out against the dangers of religious freedom abuse and child abuse. He is currently working on a book which covers his exceptional story, and is the subject of an upcoming documentary film.



**GW Secular Society**  
[skeptic@gwu.edu](mailto:skeptic@gwu.edu)  
[www.facebook.com/groups/gwsecularsociety](http://www.facebook.com/groups/gwsecularsociety)



**Allied In Pride**  
[allied@gwu.edu](mailto:allied@gwu.edu)



**Secular Student Alliance**  
[secularstudents.org](http://secularstudents.org)



**Center For Inquiry**  
[centerforinquiry.net](http://centerforinquiry.net)



**Machar: The Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism**  
<http://www.machar.org/>



# The Machar Family

## Birthdays

April 2: Mark Epstein  
April 3: Jack Segal  
April 4: Susan Morawetz  
April 6: Marlene Pratt  
April 6: Pedro Rodriguez  
April 6: Michael Zamore  
April 6: Zachary Popkin-Hall  
April 7: Nancy Harris  
April 8: Michelle Kamalich  
April 8: Jacob Royle  
April 11: Rachel Popkin-Hall  
April 11: Daniel King  
April 15: Richard Kamalich  
April 15: Bouchra Chati  
April 16: Rochelle (Shelly) Schwab  
April 17: André Williamson  
April 18: Jack Eisen-Markowitz  
April 19: Susan Warshauer Kahn  
April 19: Adam Namm  
April 20: Jill King  
April 23: Jeremy Lahn  
April 24: Peter Kahn  
April 28: Joel Block  
April 29: Roslynn Seidenstein  
April 29: David DeMocker  
April 30: Jonathon Simon

Machar's members are our biggest asset and our greatest resource in letting their friends and family know about our wonderful community.

If you recommend a member or family who joins Machar, Machar will thank you with your choice of a \$100 gift card for dining out at Lebanese Taverna or Clydes, for local shopping at Politics and Prose or Israeli Accents, or some on-line Judaica shopping at moderntribe.com or traditionsjewishgifts.com.

So please tell people about Machar; we hope to give out lots of thank you cards!

—Darlene Basch

## Anniversaries

April 1: Daniel Hellerstein and Susan Schappert  
April 1: Andy Royle and Susan Zwicker

## Yarheits: We remember...

April 4: Frank Klein, father of Jill Grant  
April 14: Richard Popkin, father of Sue Popkin  
April 16: Joseph Morris, grandfather of Laurie Miller  
April 17: Thurza Godden, mother of David Godden  
April 23: Tillie Haskin, grandmother of Patti Maslinoff

## Mazel Tov!

Congratulations to Abigail Smith on her appointment as D.C.'s Deputy Mayor for Education. She was our Yom Kippur speaker this year and her talk, "Marshmallows and a Growth Mindset," is available in PDF format on the Machar website under Holidays/Yom Kippur.

We love to share good news—don't forget to keep us up-to-date on all of the excitement within the Machar Family!

## Whaddaya Talkin'?

Marlene Cohen

*In which Machar's newsletter will provide you with Your Monthly Word in Yiddish—Use it ten times this month and you won't forget it!*

### How about a colorful insult?

#### **Paskudnyak' (masculine and feminine)**

Sounds like poss-kood-NYOK

It seems to come from a Polish and Ukrainian word meaning "nasty" or "dirty."



It can mean a coarse, vulgar, ungrateful, greedy, mean, unkind or hypocritical person.

Rosten says "It adds cadence to contempt" because the word itself sounds so insolent...there's no English word to match it. Yet my Dad always said it as a joking insult, never with contempt.

—Leo Rosten,  
*The Joys of Yinglish*, 1992

# Staff, Board of Directors, and Leadership

## Staff

### Rabbi

Binyamin (Ben) Biber

### Congregational Administrator

Kelly Hand

### Jewish Cultural School Director

Debby Brennan

## Board of Directors

### President

Nadine Wettstein

### Vice President

Darlene Basch

### Treasurers

Miriam Gitler

Susan Morawetz

### Secretary

Joyce Rosenthal

### Past President

Rick Gold

### At-Large

Laurie Miller

Manny Pastreich

Harriet Peck

Renée Weitzner

### Honorary Directors

Jules Abrams

Harold Black (*deceased*)

Ann Black

Joe Goodman

Millie Goodman

Mary Perica

Michael Prival

Henrietta Wexler

## Board Liaisons

### B'nei Mitzvah

Susan Morawetz

### Newsletter

### Rabbinic

Michael Prival

### Madrikhim

Michael Prival

Deb Godden

## Machar Committee Chairs

### Adult Ed

Marlene Cohen

Harriet Peck

### Communications

Joyce Rosenthal

### Community Service

Barbara Francisco

### Education

Larry Lawrence

### Email Lists Manager

Michael Prival

### Fundraising

David Wittenberg

### High Holidays

Nadine Wettstein

### Liturgy

Michael Prival

### Membership

Darlene Basch

### Membership Directory

Miriam Gitler

### Mishpahah

Renée Weitzner

### New Members

Marlene Cohen

### Newsletter Editor

Tricia Ekenstam Gordon

## Nominating

Nadine Wettstein

## Passover Seder

## Rabbi Committee

Michael Prival

## Shelter Staffing

Ann Levin

## Social Action

Rick Gold

## Sunday Refreshments

Ami Argaman

## Clubs and Havurot Chairs

### Book Club

Darlene Basch

Renée Weitzner

### Neighborhood Havurot

Laurie Miller

### Wimmin' In Transition (WITs)

Renée Weitzner

### Young Adult Havurah

Betsy Kolmus

## SHJ Reps from Machar

### Machar Rep to SHJ

Marlene Cohen

### SHJ Board of Directors Members

Larry Lawrence (Vice President)

Deb Godden (Secretary)

## Machar Trained Leaders

Binyamin Biber, Rabbi

Michael Prival, Madrikh

Deb Godden, Madrikha

Dan Tobocman, Spokesperson



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committed to social justice!

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## Interested in Advertising with Machar? Contact [info at machar.org](mailto:info@machar.org)

### Directions to Machar

“Cedar Lane” events are held at Cedar Lane UU Church. 9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, MD.

From DC, go north on Wisconsin Ave. (Rt. 355), pass the Naval Hospital, right on Cedar Lane., cross Beach Dr., 2nd 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 (ask the driver).

“JPDS” is the site of our Jewish Cultural School (JCS). 6045 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Metro: Red Line to Silver Spring. S-2 or S-4 bus to Federal Triangle to Military Road and cross 16th Street. JCS and Adult Ed begin promptly at 10 a.m.; please arrive early.

For meetings in private homes, contact hosts for directions.

### Machar E-mail Lists for Members and Nonmembers

*Michael Prival*

There are two different e-mail lists that Machar members can join. The first, the “Machar” list, enables members to receive the monthly Newsletter, event reminders by email, plus announcements of program changes that may occur between printed newsletters. Al-

most all Machar members are already on this list.

The second list is “MacharCommunity.” Members of this list can share information about local, non-Machar cultural, educational, social action, or community service events and activities. Any list member can post a note on the “Machar Community” list at any time.

If you would like to be added to either of these lists, or if we are not using your preferred e-mail addresses for them, please send a note to Email at machar.org. Of course you can get off these lists at any time.

### Earn for Machar Jewish Cultural School with Service Magic and DriversEd.com!

*Get Matched to Prescreened Home Improvement Contractors and earn up to \$6\*!*

Service Magic is a FREE service matching you to pre-screened, customer-rated service professionals: Maids, painters, remodelers, plumbers, roofers & more! \*Earnings depend on the type of project and range from \$2–\$6.

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With DriversEd.com, your teen can complete the required drivers education online—without ever stepping in a classroom.

Their quality course provides everything needed to prepare for the DMV permit and driver's license exams. Sign up and DriversEd.com will contribute 5% of the tuition amount to Machar's Jewish Cultural School.

### Help Machar as You Shop

*Larry Lawrence*

Machar participates in the eScrip (Electronic Scrip) program, a fundraising organization in which participating business partners contribute a percentage of your purchases to our Jewish Cultural School. Some participating businesses in the Mid-Atlantic are Safeway (which contributes 1-3% of your purchase value) and American Airlines (3%). To sign up for eScrip, go to <http://www.eScrip.com> and choose “Machar-Jewish Cultural School” as the benefiting group.

### Raise Money for SHJ While you Surf

*Use GOODSEARCH.COM to Search on the Web and Raise Money for SHJ*

GoodSearch.com is a Web search tool for organizations such as ours to raise money each time someone uses it. Simply go to [goodsearch.com](http://goodsearch.com), key in “humanistic Judaism,” and type in whatever you are searching for. You can even see how much we have raised—and imagine the potential if all of us use it! .