

The Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism

P.O. Box 42014, Washington, DC 20015 • 202-686-1881 • www.machar.org

Congratulations to Our New Board!

I'm happy to announce Machar's new board for 2015–2016:

President: Rahel Hanadari **Past President:** Darlene Basch

Treasurer: Miriam Gitler/Ester Rozenblum

Secretary: Holly Campbell-Rosen

At-large members: Norm Hall, Leah Kaplan, Amanda Nothaft, Joyce Rosenthal, Jack

Schwartz, and Renée Weitzner

Machar is so lucky to have members willing to step up and lead us as we move forward. Please give them all your support and help Machar continue to be the vibrant and welcoming community that it is.

Darlene Basch, President, 2013–14 and 2014–15

Inside this issue:

2: Scenes from Machar

6: JCS News

9: Clubs and Activities

10: The Machar Family

11: Staff, Board of Directors and Leadership

12: Information/Ads

Summer Events



Join us for a Shabbat service led by Rabbi Nehama Benmosche

Friday, June 5 at 8 p.m.

with light refreshments to follow.
Cedar Lane UU Church Chapel
9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814
Guests are welcome! No registration necessary.



Enjoy fun for all ages at our Family Potluck and Games Night

Saturday, July 18 at 6 p.m.

Schweinhaut Center Art Room 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 Bring your favorite games and a dish to share with fellow members.

Register at this link: http://bit.ly/1cONkXg

Show Your Pride in Machar at the Capital Pride Festival

On Sunday, June 14, more than 200,000 people will attend the 19th annual Capital Pride Festival near the Capitol. The entrance will be at Pennsylvania Avenue and 7th Street, NW, just a block south of the Archives metro station.

Exhibits will be open from Noon–7 p.m. with performances, food, and family-friendly activities nearby. Our members will be there, celebrating Machar's commitment to freedom, equality, and empowerment for all people; support for LGBT rights; and pride in building a diverse and LGBT-welcoming congregation devoted to Secular Humanistic Iudaism.

If you are interested in staffing the Machar table for an hour or two, please contact Marina Broitman at volunteer [at] machar.org or sign up via the link that we'll share by email and on the website.

B'nei Mitzvah Ceremonies: Surprise Yourself

I had the distinct pleasure of participating in my third b'nei mitzvah ceremony at Machar, this time as an officiant, at lan R.'s bar mitzvah last month. Ian's presentation on survivors of genocide reminded me of the power to be inspired and persuaded by another person's passion. I was touched by Ian's commitment to his project and his depth of research and envious of his experiences-like his opportunity to meet and interview a survivor of the Holocaust at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

lan's ceremony was the first among his cohort, the rest of whom will celebrate their b'nei mitzvah in 2015– 2016. They began their ceremony with a song I wrote, inspired by an idea from Oliver, another one of our upcoming b'nei mitzvah. You can sing along in your head to the familiar tune from Fiddler on the Roof:

MAZEL TOV: WITH A TWIST BY RABBI NEHAMA BENMOSCHE Class:

A blessing onto me, Mazel tov, Mazel tov B'nei mitzvah are we, Mazel tov, Mazel tov An occasion without flaw Like no one ever saw It's Secular Humanistic Iudaism

Nehama: Secular what?

Class

We celebrate the Jews, Mazel tov, Mazel tov We interweave our views, Mazel tov, Mazel tov We've learned a lot to say and stand up here today



Proud of our Humanism

Nehama:

Your humanism...l thought this was supposed to be Jewish?

Class:

You're not mistaken, friends and our dear family

This is our group b'nei mitzvah celebrating secular humanistic Judaism!

Nehama:

No, No, No, No! This should long and boring and in HEBREW!

They shouldn't understand a word. Help me define what you've preferred...

Class:

We don't pray to a god, Mazel tov, Mazel tov Though some may find that odd,



Mazel tov, Mazel tov Just have an open mind Like we luckily did find Becoming Machar b'nei mitzvah

MAZEL TOV!!

Scenes from Machar

AND NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TOO! BEGINNING THIS FALL: ADULT B'NEI MITZVAH CLASS OF 2017

This fall we will launch a two year course for adults who want to have a b'nei mitzvah ceremony. The class will meet monthly for one hour before adult ed and JCS (or on Sunday afternoons at Cedar Lane in Bethesda depending upon availability of the different locations and the preferences of a critical mass of interested participants). The course will cover topics that parallel some of the highlights of our Jewish Cultural School curriculum. Some of the sessions may include, but are not limited to: secular humanist values, critical approaches to Bible stories, life and literature of Eastern European Jewry before the Shoah, the history of Zionism and the development of the

modern state of Israel, comparative religions and Judaisms and spiritual journeys and faith stories as an interpersonal exploration within the group.

NO PREVIOUS JEWISH EDUCA-TION OR KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

The class is meant to draw people who may want to affirm their Jewish identity with a public ceremony, people who always wanted a mitzvah ceremony but never got to have one, and anyone who just wants an opportunity to have a smaller setting of Jewish learning and engagement than our typical adult education offerings. When the class size reaches 10 students, we will close the class and consider offering a second class to be taught at an alternative time to keep the class size intimate.

This is a two-year program, culminating with a public display of learning and research, similar to the way we celebrate the b'nei mitzvah of our JCS students.

If you are interested in this class, please email or call me and Kelly and we will send you a form to confirm your intent to enroll.

Looking forward to this being the first of many new opportunities to learn together as I continue my tenure as the "rabbi of tomorrow!"

Remember that my virtual door is always open. Feel free to call, text or email any time: Rabbi Nehama Benmosche 215-475-2814 rabbi@machar.org





Top left: Israeli dancing on our April 26 Israel Education Day. Bottom left: Larry Lawrence at his May 3 Adult Ed presentation, "Non-joiners Unite!" Top right: Students perform a play, created by teacher Lisa Kaufman with her fourth grade class, based on the story of Jonah and the whale on May 3.



Scenes from Machar







Photos from Machar's annual community Passover Seder on Saturday, April 4.

Scenes from Machar

Photos from Machar's end-of-year picnic on Sunday, May 17.





Kindergarten/First Grade:

The K-1 class read "Dreamer from The Village: The Story of Marc Chagall" about the famous Jewish artist who emphasized color, shapes, and dreams in his modern artwork. The class reviewed colors in Hebrew through a game in which each student took a turn naming an object associated with an assigned color as fast as possible. They also played "I spy" outside during recess at the end of class. The kids got a brief introduction to the Hebrew letters through listening to the Alef-Bet Song and acting out a couple of the poses in "Alef Bet Yoga", which involves forming the Hebrew letters using yoga poses. The students made bookmarks with their names in English and Hebrew (I can help write the Hebrew and the kids can trace/color it). They also read "The Rabbi and the Twenty-Nine Witches" about a rabbi who uses cleverness to defeat witches. -Rachel Norman

Second Grade:

The second graders have been studying more Hebrew letters, and they explored Yom Ha'atzmaut with this lesson through The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington. Your other kids may enjoy it as well, so here's the link: <a href="http://www.visraelschool.com/pages/unit_detail?unit=unit_ten-activity=videos&access=Dybu7dL5-activity=videos&access=Dybu7

The class completed a Mother's Day present decorating picture frames, and a painting of cherry blossoms.

—Jessica Freilich

Third Grade:

The third graders have been listening to a variety of Jewish music, studying Hebrew, and collaborating with the 4th grade class on a fun play about Jonah and the Whale. They have

also been discussing Maimonides' Eight Levels of Charity. —Joshua Fischman

Fourth Grade:

The fourth graders made afikomen covers for Pesach. They also discussed Yom Ha'atzmaut, and listened to HaTikvah. They discussed why it is important to have holidays such as this, and why it is important for countries, especially Israel, to have a national anthem.

The students also performed in a play about the story "Jonah and the Whale" on May 3.

—Lisa Kaufman

Fifth Grade:

The fifth graders continue to review their Hebrew letters. They continued to read "Out of Many Waters." The class had a discussion activity on assimilation, relating back to both the novel they are reading and their current unit in Jewish history on enlightenment. They talked about what assimilation is, how to be proud and open about our own heritage and culture, and how to create an environment in which others can feel proud and open about their heritage.

—Aviva Downing

Sixth/Seventh Grade:

The class discussed the Holocaust in terms of what it meant to individuals and their families during World War II.

An attorney came to the class to discuss the idea of right and wrong as well as law and justice with the students.

Each student brought in an article of an injustice that meant something to them, why they thought it was an injustice, how they thought they might be able to create change. It

was a round table discussion and the class discussed racial discrimination, animals being abandoned, pollution, and genocide in Rwanda. It was very moving to hear students talk about things that were passionate to them. After every article the class related it back to humanism and how it is our job to repair the world (tikkun olam).

They also practiced the songs for lan's Bar Mitzvah, discussed the significance of the ceremony, and the class went over the tune to the song Rabbi Nehama made-up for students.

—Stefanie Kushner

Teens

Several of Machar's teens attended this year's conclave in Michigan. They came back with renewed enthusiasm, and they have promised to orchestrate a Shabbat service next Fall sharing some of the resources, songs and readings from this year's conclave.

The teens and the teen mentor described the weekend as follows: Teens:

The theme for this year's teen conclave was identities. Combined with a group of 50 other teens like us, we had a great time comparing and contrasting our unique identities. In addition to bonding immediately with other Humanistic Jews like us, we also participated in activities to help us better understand what our identities mean to us. On Friday night we explores identities in creating our own plaster masks, each molded to fit our inner selves. We also worked with other teens to put together three different Shabbat services from songs and readings used at previous services. Every year at conclave there are several community services projects. In Boston

we split up and traveled to homeless shelters, food pantries and did a river cleanup. In Detroit this year, we made fleece blankets to give to cancer patients as part of an organization named Project Linus and also made dog toys for the local animal shelter. Overall, conclave is a fun and special way to connect with other teens that share the same values as us but are also open to discussing and accepting our differences.

Marc:

In Detroit, Michigan about 50 teens, from around the country converged for a weekend of reflection and bonding. The states represented included Washington DC, Michigan, Boston, Connecticut, New York, Chicago, Arizona, Texas, Seattle and Toronto. Identity was the overall

theme of the conclave trip, where the various Rabbis led engaging workshops for the kids to connect and learn from their peers. The statement "Religion Should Exist" caused a wide spectrum of perspectives among the group, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The workshops pushed them to delve deeper into their personal values and religious connections. Conclave was unique, as the teens seemed more open and vulnerable because the environment was safe and nurturing. There is no incentive for myself to promote conclave for future teenagers and their parents, but this trip is invaluable and I believe that every kid would have a great time, building friendships and bonding with other like-minded individuals.

Teens Collected Over \$450 for Doctors without Borders!

This year, the teen group chose public health as the focus of tzedakah collection at Machar's Sunday sessions. The Ebola outbreak in Africa initially inspired this interest. Teens researched a variety of public health organizations and ultimately selected Doctors without Borders as the beneficiary for the money collected. A few words on the website of Doctors without Borders sum up the organization's mission: "Medical aid where it is needed most. Independent. Neutral. Impartial." Congratulations to the teens for collecting over \$450 over the course of the year, and thanks to all who contributed!



Survey for JCS Students

Thirty students answered the end of year survey. Here are their answers: (Not all students answered all questions.)

What is your favorite Jewish holiday? Do you like the way that we celebrate this holiday at Machar? Hanukkah - overwhelming favorite; a clear majority enjoy the way Machar celebrates Hanukkah.

Passover

Purim

Rosh Hashanah - one student Christmas (!) (K/1 class)

What could your class do at Machar that we don't do?

Several students said more field trips, younger students wrote more candy! Several students asked for more plays, one student asked for more arts and crafts, one student asked for more Jewish holiday books. One student asked for more activities outdoors.

What did you like best about your teacher this year?
Answers included: "understanding," "nice," "funny," "did not yell that much," "relaxed" and "interesting," "the quizzes, plays and videos;" many students wrote "fun."

Would you like more of any of the following?

Israeli dancing - 2 students singing - 2 students Reading books (stories) - 12 students Jewish movies - 21 students Plays to act in -16 students

Did you enjoy learning Hebrew? Can you read all of the letters? Enjoyment – 11 students Reading all letters – 5 students

Six students said that they sort of enjoyed learning Hebrew.

Could you describe Secular Humanistic Judaism to someone your age who is not Jewish? What would you say?

Answers from students:

"It is a way of celebrating that we are Jewish, and I'd explain what Jewish is."

"I'm Jewish but I'm not religious"
"Jewish culture without belief in
God"

"Giving to others and not believing that there is a supreme being."

"The practice of Jewish culture without believing in God."

"Very unorthodox"

"It's where we celebrate all the holidays but not very religious."

"Celebrating Judaism without the strict religious part."

"It's being Jewish without prayers or Hebrew, just the history and holidays."

"My Dad is not Jewish"

What was your favorite part of class this year?

Answers included: "Doing the play Jonah and the Whale," "Jewish Heroes", "Arts and crafts," (five students), "Learning about Passover", "Recess" (several students), "Learning about the holocaust" (three students), "reading stories/books" (five students)

Do you know what the Bible is? Do you know any stories from the bible? What is your favorite?

21 students answered yes. Favorite stories ranged from Adam and Eve, the Passover story, Jonah and the Whale, Noah's Ark, Cain and Abel, to the story of Daniel.

What did you not like about your class this year?

16 students said "nothing" or they did not know, and three students said they would like to be more active or go outside more. One student said that the chairs were too small, and one class said that they would rather do Lego building than art projects. One student said he did not like learning the Hebrew alphabet.

Thanks for Machar Members' Generous Support for MAZON, a Jewish Response to Hunger

We collected a grand total of almost \$500 in cash and checks for MAZON, A Jewish Response to Hunger at our Purim party and Passover Seder! Thanks to all who contributed to this important cause. Here is an excerpt from a thank you letter signed by MAZON's President and CEO, Abby J. Leibman:

"As Jews we are compelled to fight for justice – at MAZON that means working to end the devastating hunger that plagues so many of our friends, family and neighbors. And as a member of MAZON's extended family, you are an invaluable partner in our fight."

Clubs and Activities

WITs

Renée Weitzner

The wonderful women of WITS will be meeting over the summer. Here is our schedule for the next few months for your calendars. We met on May 27 at the home of Myrna Frank . In June, on Friday, June 26, we will be meeting at the home of Vicki Wallshein. I will need to know if you are coming and what you are bringing two days before we meet so that I can let our host know. In July we will be meeting on Wednesday, July 22 at the home of Marlene Cohen. On Wednesday, August 26, we will meet at the home of Katie Wittenberg. All meetings begin at 7 pm.

Should you have any questions please feel free to contact me at rwcats [at] aol. com.

Thanks very much to our gracious hosts and friendly members

Book Club

Renée Weitzner and Darlene Basch

The Book Club of Machar will be reading a fascinating series of books over the course of the year 2015-2016. Over the summer we will be reading *The Pope and* Mussolini by David I. Kertzer, a book that explores the relationship between the Pope Pius XI and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. We will determine a date and place later, probably some time in September. Other books we will be reading this year include, My Beloved World by Sonia Sotomayor, 100 Years of Solitude by Gabriel Marquez, Nina Balatka by Anthony Trollope, and The Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr. These books all sound fascinating and have been recommended by members of the Book Club. Other books under consideration for either this year or next include A Woman in Berlin by an anonymous author and Crossing the Borders of Time by Leslie Maitland.

I hope you will be able to join us for our insightful and perceptive meetings. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns at rwcats [at] aol.com.

Young Adult Havurah

Leah Kaplan and Danielle Leff (non-members welcome)

On Friday, June 26 from 6:30-8:30 p.m., join the Young Adult Havurah and Rabbi Benmosche for a brief Shabbat candle lighting followed by dinner and a discussion about the Young Adult Havurah.

Come hear what we have in store for the next year and help brainstorm ideas for the kind of activities you want to see. Help make the Young Adult Havurah into the organization that reflects and supports your interests!

Membership not required for attendance. Dinner will be either take-out or at a restaurant, depending on the number of people.

Details at www.facebook.com/groups/ macharyah or contact Leah@kaplanson-line.net

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!

Gornisht (Gore nisht – just like it is spelled)

More polite than bupkes, and also implies a strong sense of nothing. It is used in phrases such as "gornisht helfn" (beyond help) (compliments of *The Yiddish Handbook: 40 Words You Should Know*) So when you're trying hard and nothing comes of it, ya got "gornisht"

Best campaign button I ever saw –
Photo of Al Gore / Photo of George Bush
Captions:

Gore / Gornisht

source 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!

Machar's members are our

biggest asset and our greatest re-

-Darlene Basch

The Machar Family

Birthdays

June 4: Everett Tobocman

June 4: Piper Tobocman

June 5: Ann Argaman

June 5: Yan Raytselis

June 6: Emmett Zamore

June 6: Danielle Leff

June 7: Norman Hall

June 8: Ariana Rodriguez-Gitler

June 11: Jasper Tobocman

June 11: Barry Dancis

June 13: Ian Emanuel Roe

June 15: Hildie Block

June 18: Jeremy Liberman

June 20: Alyssa Lahn

June 20: Rahel Hanadari

June 24: Rebecca Desemberg

June 24: Patricia Meeks Schnell

June 25: Phyllis Hodes

June 25: Judith Weisberg

June 25: Jack Schwartz

June 26: Heather DeMocker

June 28: Anita Willens

June 28: Alexandra Walker

June 29: Kenneth Lederman

June 30: Stephen Cohen

July 1: Mei Huang

July 2: Margot Bloch

July 4: Sebastian Goldberg

July 4: Mildred Goodman

July 6: Daisy Hand

July 7: Richard Gold

July 14: Katie Wittenberg

July 18: Anika Gonzalez

July 28: Daniel Tomashevsky

Anniversaries

June 1: Joshua Rogin and Bridget Ehart

June 6: Alexandra and Ken Walker

June 9: Amy and André Williamson

June 12: Sue Popkin and Norman Hall

June 19: Harriet and Gary Peck

June 20: Alberto Grosmark and Ester Rozenblum

June 20: Barry and Elaine Dancis

June 24: David and Katie Wittenberg

June 28: Brian and Sarah Kirkell

June 29: Susan Warshauer Kahn and Peter Kahn

June 29: Richard Gold and Bouchra Chati

June 30: Carla Kopell and Guiseppe Topa

Yarhzeits: We remember...

June 1: Arthur Freedman, relative of Michal Freedman

June 5: Joe Zamore, father of Michael Zamore

June 10: Bryan Medwed, son of Mary Perica

June 12: David Goldwain, uncle of Miriam Gitler

June 13: Robert Tebelman, father of Linda Tebelman

June 30: Rita Maslinoff, mother of Jill L. King and Patti Maslinoff

July: Naomi Gardner, cousin of Keith Campbell-Rosen

July: Howard Campbell, brother of Holly Campbell

July: Fred Martinez, step-father of Holly Campbell

July: Ruth Aides, great aunt of Danielle Leff

July 3: Morton Seidenstein, father of Roslynn Seidenstein

July 4: Arthur Zwicker, father of Sue Zwicker

July 17: Kenneth Hall, father of Norm Hall

July 26: Ann Weisberg, sister of Jill Grant

Mazel Toy!



Mazel tov to members Danielle Leff and Brian Pujanauski, who married each other on Saturday, April 4 in a small, humanist ceremony in Washington, DC's Meridian Hill Park. Rabbi Nehama Benmosche officiated at the wedding just a few hours before leading Machar's Passover Seder.

Mazel tov to member Brenda Platt, who received an Azalea Award for Green Activism at the Celebrate Takoma festival on May 17. Brenda is the Co-Director of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance and co-leader, along with Machar member Nadine Bloch, of the Young Activist Club. Brenda helps to make Machar a greener community by guiding us in the purchase of compostable paper goods and bringing washable forks to many of our events.

Staff, Board of Directors, and Leadership

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Nehama Benmosche

Congregational Administrator

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Jewish Cultural School Director

Debby Brennan

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Renee Weitzner

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Ann Black (deceased)

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Donna Copeland

Wimmin' In Transition (WITs)

Renée Weitzner

Young Adult Havurah

Leah Kaplan

Danielle Leff

SHJ Reps from Machar

Machar Rep to SHJ

Marlene Cohen

SHI Board of Directors Members

Larry Lawrence (President)

Rick Gold

Machar Trained Leaders

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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 oc-

cur between printed newsletters. Almost all Machar members are already on this list.

The second list is "Machar Community." 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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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, 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!.