

York County Jewish Community News

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Clockwise from Top Right: Phyllis, Ellie & David, Ritch Joy & his Art, Teen Class at Rockefeller Center, A Scene from the film "The Beetle".

The Maine Jewish Film Festival Wanders into Biddeford

"The Beetle" Shown at City Theater in Biddeford for the MJFF 2009 Festival Closing

Approximately two hundred people came to City Theater on Sunday afternoon, March 29 for the screening of the Israeli film, "The Beetle." Whether on the main floor or in the balcony, the audience laughed and cried with the ups and downs of this movie.

In Hebrew with English subtitles, the film tells the story of Yishai and Eliaraz, a young couple about to welcome their first child into the world. Life gets complicated for Yishai when Eliaraz announces that his beloved VW beetle is not safe for driving with a baby.

The film was preceded by a delicious champagne luncheon sponsored by Destination Catering at McArthur Hall. Luckily, it was *not* pouring rain when we walked from the hall to the theater, although it was during other parts of the day. It was a great day to be at the movies!



Thank You to the Film's Sponsors:

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Barbara Simensky
Laura Slap-Shelton
Beth & David Strassler
Nate Wilson & Trish Gallagher
Samuel Zaitlin



B'nai Mitzvah Retreat: December 3 - 5

Camp Merrowvista, Tuftonboro, NH



--by Joyce Hollman

"L'dor vador
nagid gadlechah

L'dor vador, we
protect this chain

From generation
to generation...."

As we sat in a circle at Shabbat morning service singing this simple yet powerful version of a familiar prayer, a stillness descended upon children and parents alike. Something happened. We were no longer two groups of parents and kids who had just traveled hours to meet each other, unsure of what would happen next. We were a community.

Our retreat at Camp Merrowvista in New Hampshire was designed for parents and children on the path to Bar or Bat Mitzvah. It included families from our synagogue and the Upper Valley Jewish Center in Hanover, NH.

The weekend left my daughter, Thea, and me, with many gifts. The greatest for me was the joy of being able to quickly build a Jewish com-

munity that, though temporary, was genuine. It was a place for the kids to explore the feelings and changes accompanying this transition in their Jewish lives. For adults, it was a time to connect with other parents, share stories, build connections with those we knew and had just met.

We shared family-style meals around a huge table, each of us taking a turn to serve, clear, set up or wash dishes. This, and singing with Sue and her guitar, reminded more than one of us of our Jewish camp days.

We got to *level* over our kids, who formed alliances and bonded quickly and warmly. We got to be amazed as people we knew challenged themselves by walking across a log suspended some twenty feet in the air, trusting that they'd be belayed, or caught, when they fell. We got to partner with our kids to create quilt squares depicting their Torah portion. And, we got to sneak around trying to pin clothespins on others without being caught (I still have a few I couldn't get rid of!)

This last activity was the brainchild of the three Merrowvista counselors, whose vitality and positive spirit managed to engage even the most reticent among us. We found ourselves singing silly songs at meals! We shivered in the cold together, stepping through a ropes course holding hands, trying desperately not to ring the jingle bells that were set as booby traps. We walked blindfolded across a "minefield" of objects strewn across the floor, guided by our child's voice.

It was nearly impossible to make out our kid's voice from amongst the other dozen or so that were screaming, "Go left!" "Stop!" "Back up!" This illustrated for the parents how difficult it can be for our young adults to know which voice to listen to as they are asked to make more and more difficult choices in life.

On Saturday night, the kids all dragged their sleeping bags into the basement of the lodge and watched movies, some (including my own) falling asleep tangled up with someone whose name they hadn't even known twenty-four hours previously. The adults sat upstairs by the fire and talked.

For Thea, meeting other kids who were preparing to be Bar and Bat Mitzvah, and hearing them talk about their fears and excitement, opened up a willingness to begin the process of preparing for her own turn. I'm sure that when that turn comes, this weekend will be one of the things which will make it more meaningful for her.

--by Jon Goldberg

"You can make it! Just a little farther!"

The tension was palpable as one of our Etz Chaim family balanced precariously on an inclined log 20 feet above the concrete floor of the climbing gym at Camp Merrowvista. And though this was the kind of encouragement we might expect a parent to give a 13-year-old, in fact the roles were reversed.

Dad was high above the floor at the end of a tether, completely dependent on the newly learned belaying skills of his son. Throughout the climbing gym, mothers entrusted their safety to daughters; children relied on total strangers; and a community grew where less than 24 hours earlier there had been....nothing.

What made it possible was the encouraging, confident guidance of our young instructors at Camp Merrowvista and the efforts of Hebrew School teachers Sue & Sarah who have for some seven years spearheaded these annual retreats for Jewish youth and their parents. We learned rudimentary rock climbing skills. We learned to step outside our comfort zones without entering danger zones. We learned to trust

Once Again, Our Teens Take to the Streets of NYC: March 21 & 22

by Sadie Cole



Above R to L:
Sandra, Sam,
Beniam, Silas,
Hattie, Lauren,
Charlotte, Sadie,
& Katie at
Rockefeller Center.
Right: Lady Liberty



(by Jon Goldberg, cont'd. from prev page)

ourselves and to trust others. And that was just the beginning.

For approximately 36 hours, five Etz Chaim Hebrew School students, each accompanied by a parent, immersed themselves in a program designed to ease the transition from child to young adult—from *yeledim* to Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The skeptics among us (Was there anyone who wasn't skeptical?) tolerated the getting-to-know-you exercises, the team-building challenges, and yes, even the Shabbat Services.

Our reward was a thoroughly enjoyable day-and-a-half of bonding with our kids; finding commonalities of experiences, concerns, and objectives with Jews from central New Hampshire who, at least for a short time, became our fast friends; and challenging our thinking about the abilities of our pre-teen-aged children.

I'll leave it to the rabbis and philosophers to draw the connection between these activities and the celebration of *b'nai mitzvot*. For a first-hand account of what transpired on this special weekend, ask Thea and Joyce Hollman, Nate and Ben Wilson, Tara and Jeff Levy, Matthew and Howard Sherman, or Marcus and Jon Goldberg. Each of us has a different story, but all of us felt the adventure was enjoyable, educational, and worthwhile.

As part of the Teen Class this year, I was given the opportunity to go to New York City to experience some of the cultural influences Judaism has on the City, and also to just have a great time. I went with eight of my other classmates and Rob, our teacher.

We left Maine at 6:00 am to begin our long car ride. In that one day we managed to: drive to New York City and stop at Rein's Deli for a delicious breakfast on the way, go to the beautiful Jewish Museum, go street shopping and walking a lot, go to the Stage Deli for dinner and get cheesecake bigger than any that we had ever seen before, and finally go to the amazing West Side Story on Broadway. The dancing and singing was outstanding at the Broadway play, all the food was delicious everywhere and the art at the museum was so detailed and interesting to look at. Rob did a great job making everything flow so we could get as much done as possible without going completely crazy.

The next day was also jam packed! We began by going to Temple Emanu-El, the largest temple in the world. It was one of the most amazing things I have ever seen; the ceiling looked like it went on forever and the details in the walls and stained glass windows looked like they must have taken thousands of years to finish. My fingers couldn't stop taking pictures because I kept finding more and more amazing things in the Temple. I think we all felt lucky to be in a place known so well all around the world.

Next, we went to the Guggenheim Museum. It was very modern and some of us couldn't grasp the fact that a plain black canvas was "exquisite art" but it was still very cool and many of the exhibits were hard to stop looking at. The architecture of the building was very unique and it was a cool place to be. Last, we went to Battery Park to look at the ocean and see the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

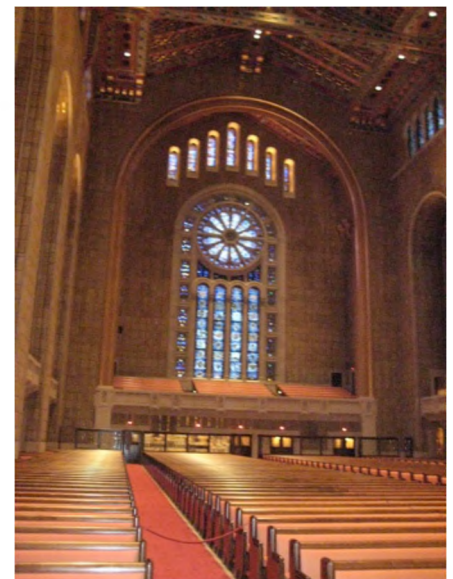
We took so many pictures of the amazing view and were having a great time but it finally came time to go into our last stop: The Museum of Jewish Heritage. There, we had a tour guide who actually grew up in Israel which was very cool.

The museum is about the Holocaust; the life before, during and after. One of my classmates pointed out that this museum did a good job of adding in a bit of the positive side to the depressing Holocaust, that the Jews did get over the Holocaust and we are still here today.

The tour ended with huge windows looking out to the Statue of Liberty, a sign of hope and freedom. It was an amazing way to end our trip, our whole group looking out the window, knowing a scary past of our culture is behind us and we are looking to the future and all the opportunities that are available to us.

I had a great time, I learned a lot and I think I can say that for our whole group. I feel fortunate that I was able to do this and I'm so thankful to the Cohen Foundation, Congregation Etz Chaim and Rob.

It is a trip I will never forget!





Dear Elie Wiesel,

On July 12th, 2008 I became a Bat Mitzvah. It started with much anticipation and ended with big smiles. After attending Etz Chaim Synagogue in Biddeford, Maine for 6 years, all of my hard work had paid off. I felt elated. Nothing could bring me down.

In my final year of Hebrew School the curriculum focused mainly on life issues and decisions. We read numerous books. Some were about Japanese culture, while others discussed the Holocaust. We read your book, Night. My teacher made it very clear that your story was true from the beginning, but still, I could not comprehend that fact until after I finished reading it. All the horrible things that happened to you opened my eyes. Before reading about your experience, I was never fully aware of everything that Jews were put through at that time. I'd heard of Anne Frank. I'd heard of the ghettos, but still, none of it sunk in. What had happened finally started to register when I got to the part about the babies being thrown into the flames. Just like you, I was appalled and sickened. How could someone be so blinded by hatred to do such an awful deed? Who would actually follow through with the task? How could someone think that by eradicating an entire people that their problems would be solved? My mind was swimming with questions. Separating families, killing those who could not work, everything that happened did not make sense. I quickly realized that if someone made one false move it would cost them their life. Those thoughts made it harder and harder to finish the book. My teacher told us it was not something you wanted to read before going to bed. She was right. As my mom came in to say goodnight, I could not speak and was holding back tears.

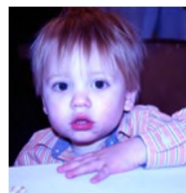
The thing that I can't get over is that you were twelve years old when your story started. When I was read Night I was twelve. Now I'm thirteen and I have friends who are fourteen. I worry about what I'm going to wear everyday while you worried whether or not you were going to survive to the next day. You had to worry about your father. You didn't know what had happened to your mom and sisters. I'd never had been able to go through that. I'd never had been able to survive not knowing. The scary part is that it could have been me. If I had been born when you were I would have had to go through the same thing. Being torn away from home, separated from my family, forced to work in freezing cold weather? I can't imagine being in that situation. These facts really petrify me. I go to school and occasionally here people insult others by calling them Jews. You questioned your faith in G-d and were beaten. You witnessed people being killed. You almost starved to death. Then you were able to write about it. That took bravery and courage to dig deep into the crevices of your mind and allow those memories to resurface. I admire you greatly for that.

In a way, I owe my life to you and all the other Holocaust survivors. Without all of you I probably would not be here. You carried on Jewish tradition and now I will, too. You once said, "There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest." So, thank you. I am here because of it. Thank you for never giving up. Thank you for writing Night. I have learned much from it.



Sincerely,

Elyse Oliver



Sunday School 2008-09

by Adrienne Levy

We've had another fun filled year of Sunday School, with families and friends coming together, teaching and learning a little more about the Jewish holidays and celebrations from each other. All the kids are so cute and well behaved that it's a privilege to play with and teach them! We did many age appropriate activities:

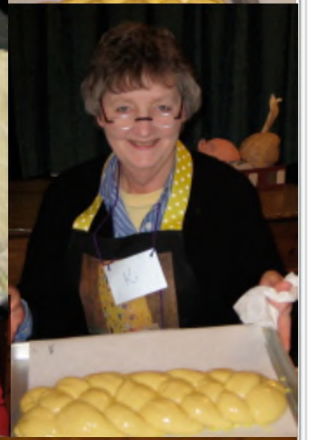
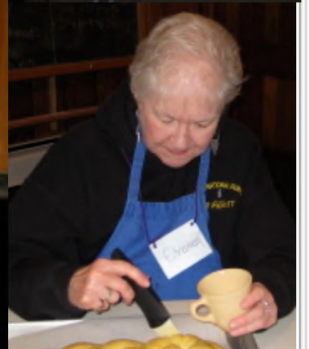
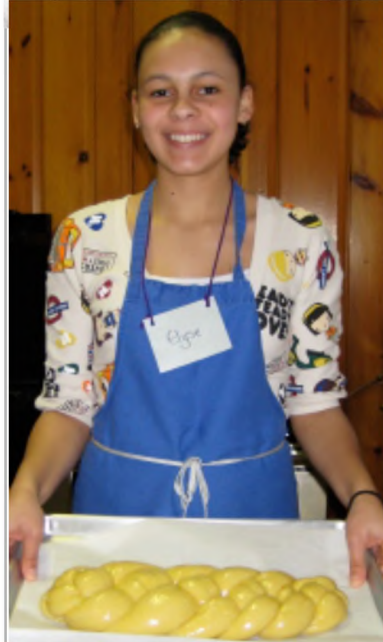
- **sang songs** (with other parents' help, esp. Margaret's)
- **made crafts**, such as painting plant pots and planting herb seeds in them, dipping wax to make candles (with parental/bigger kid's help), painting and playing dreidel (with delicious chocolate Gelt prizes), made a tree and posted leaves with family photos on it.
- **played games** during our Purim celebration
- **& read stories aloud**. Of course, Barbara was kind enough to help us by reading stories to the kids and families sitting around her.

We even had a new participant in the crafts toward the end of the season. Noah Hammond has attended since he was an infant, but just began to be able to participate in the activities.

We had lots of fun and hope everyone returns and hopefully more kids will attend with their families.



Thank you to the entire Levy Family for organizing a terrific year of Sunday School!



**Challah
Baking
Workshops
January 25
&
March 1**





PURIM
PARTY



Model
Seder



How does Me'ah work?

It brings together curious students with approachable, knowledgeable teachers. The teachers are *exceptionally* knowledgeable and adept at presenting complicated material in a limited amount of time.

We are all adults and mostly, but not all, Jewish. This isn't your junior high school religious education. This is an interested, questioning class whose members contribute frequently to the topic at hand—all of us. It is not a shy class. It is a smart class. It is exciting to look at the basics of Judaism with an adult mind and ask adult questions. It is also important that our instructors respect us as adults, and they do.

The topics are Jewish and we quickly realized that these are parts of history we never learned in public school. Me'ah describes the Jewish presence throughout world history and offers a perspective for understanding its character in each time period. The four semesters of Me'ah are each assigned to a specific chronological period: Bible, Rabbinics, Medieval & Modern. We have a different teacher for each semester.

Assigned readings are always optional for class participation. But when read ahead of time, they provide a great foundation for the topic. They stimulate class members to begin to formulate questions and allow the instructor to go more deeply into the topic during class time, which flies by.

By the way, in the spirit of true adult learning, there are no tests, not even quizzes, and no papers. The incentive is yours alone. It works for us! —Beth & David

Me'ah at Kerem Shalom in Concord, MA

by Beth &
David Strassler



"Our Class"

*From R to L,
Standing: Lisa,
Diane, Linda,
Dorothy, Harvey,
Wendy, David,
Carole, Beth,
Carolyn, Batya,
Lynn Carole,
Rosalie. Seated
R to L: Colleen,
Kitty, Chager.
Missing from the
Photo: Jamie,
Faye, Linda.*

We're known as "the couple from Maine" who drives to Kerem Shalom in Concord, MA on Tuesdays to attend Me'ah.

We heard about the course from a friend who commuted from York to the Newton site for two years. After going to the "Taste of Me'ah" sponsored by Hebrew College, we were hooked.

As we explored the where's & when's of attending, we matched our schedule with the day and time at Kerem Shalom. We found a welcoming community, starting with the cantor & Me'ah Coordinator, Rosalie Gerut, who offered to put us up anytime the weather could interfere with our return home. Luckily, before the first session, we realized we were driving to Concord, MA, not Concord, NH.

The welcome continued from the class members. We studied together, talked together, & found common interests. But over time, it became clear how the experience is more.

This particular class is an interesting, eclectic combination of intellectually curious people—mostly women.

David is the token male student. As we fill up the classroom, it begins to buzz and whirr with expectation. We have each made a big commitment to learn together for two years.

For the rare times when we could not attend, the class had been recorded and posted through the Me'ah website. thanks to reliable class members.

Of course, each two hour session could be expanded into a semester course. It has begun to feel like a higher level of "A Taste of Me'ah" and the more you learn, the more you want to know. It's never enough. There is a big world of Jewish learning out there---we want to be in it! And we have already begun to discuss what we will do once the last semester is over.



Thank you to the Congregation Etz Chaim Board of Directors for their financial support.

Creating Your Legacy

When It Comes To Your Estate Plan It's Never Too Early

by William Calvert

You save and invest for decades to build up the retirement nest egg you have envisioned, but you want more than that. You want to make sure your family is provided for after you're gone. Or, maybe you want to create a legacy through charitable organizations you support. For those reasons, you may want to consider creating a comprehensive estate plan.

Of course, if you're not retiring for several years you may think it's too early to think about drafting an estate plan. While no one can foretell the future, it pays to be prepared.

Where should you begin? For starters, get organized. Draw up a list of all your important documents — property deeds, brokerage statements, bank accounts, life insurance policies, etc. — and where they can be found. Next, update all beneficiary designations on life insurance policies, retirement accounts and pension plans.

Review these designations once a year to reflect changes in your life, such as the birth of a child, a death in the family, a marriage or a divorce.

If you want to include a charitable group in your estate plans, such as Congregation Etz Chaim, it can be as simple as making a bequest in your will. Or, you might want to consider a charitable remainder trust. So, how does this work?

You donate an appreciated asset, such as a stock or piece of real estate to the trust, which can then be sold. The proceeds are then used to purchase a portfolio of securities. From the trust, you receive an income stream for life. Upon your death, the charitable organization receives the remaining principal. By setting up a trust, you can avoid a capital gains tax and you can claim a deduction on your current-year taxes. And since you're moving assets from your estate, your beneficiaries will have fewer estate taxes to pay.

This article is provided by William Calvert, a financial consultant at RBC Wealth Management in Portland, ME (800-341-0336), and was prepared by or in cooperation with RBC Wealth Management. The information included in this article is not intended to be used as the primary basis for making investment decisions nor should it be construed as a recommendation to buy or sell any specific security. RBC Wealth Management does not endorse this organization or publication. Consult your investment professional for additional information and guidance.

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שלום Ellie



Ellie Cole “came up through the ranks” of our Hebrew School-- student, Bat Mitzvah, teen, teacher. She graduates in May and heads off to Colgate in the fall. Her students will miss her very much.

Here is one of the essays she wrote for her college applications:

“Teaching Hebrew to boys with Superman aspirations and Gameboys is the antithesis to teaching horseback riding to girls with pink hair ribbons and Olympic dreams. I reach girls through clothing, Hannah Montana, and our mutual love of horses. Eight-year-old boys care about who is strongest, football scores, and food.

On my first Thursday at 3:45 pm, the boys saw me, laughed, and danced away. How impressive was my Hebrew knowledge when they just wanted to be the next Tom Brady? They never listened.

Until one day. They didn't do their homework, but I did mine. I learned the scores of every football game and quizzed them. Their jaws dropped. One boy threatened to beat me up; I made him arm-wrestle me. That quieted him and his tiny biceps.

My boys began to see me in a different light. We finally began to understand the same language, which actually involved Hebrew. I cherished the Thursday when they sprinted to greet me.”

CLYNK



Financial Report

We raised \$450 for the Annual Teen Trip to NYC. This is a huge success. *Thank you* to everyone who donated their redeemable cans/bottles or cash to the program.

Don't Stop!! Let's continue CLYNK to start raising money for next year's Teen Trip. There will always be a supply of green bags with our special bar code on the table as you enter the synagogue.



Ritch Joy recently presented his color portrait of the bimah of our synagogue to the community. Someone has already expressed an interest in making a limited number of lithograph copies. If you are interested in purchasing one, write

mail@etzchaimme.org

The Blessing of a Skinned Knee

by Jeff Levy

The Blessing of the Skinned Knee was written by Wendy Mogel, PhD, a clinical psychologist and parent educator. It is an exceptional book, filled with solid advice for parents, and is permeated with Jewish wisdom.

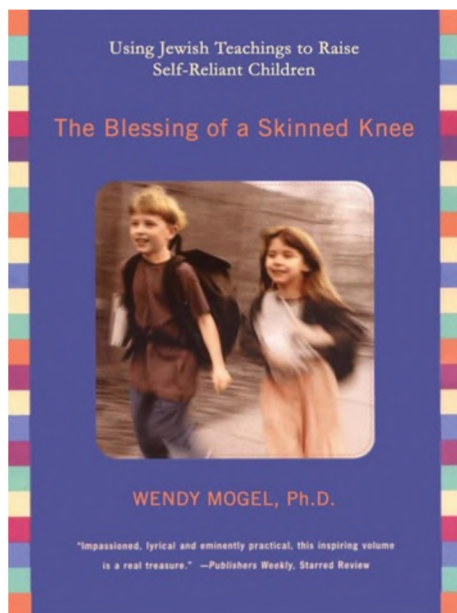
The title chapter gives good advice to parents who tend to be overprotective, which results in children who are unable to function effectively, to the point where they are unable to solve their own problems.

Another chapter, which gives wonderful advice to parents is called the Blessing of Self-Control. It advises parents to view their child's most annoying trait, and encourages them to see it as their greatest strength. For example, the author suggests you can view a stubborn child as persistent, a complaining child as discerning and an argumentative child as forthright and outspoken.

The author backs up her advice with Jewish Teaching from the Talmud and the Torah.

The book is a quick and easy read-- chock full of sage insights around parenting issues. I have taken some of the wisdom of the book to influence my own parenting. I have also incorporated many of the teachings into my therapy practice.

I am grateful to receive this gift from our Hebrew School Jewish Literacy Project and the Sam L. Cohen Foundation. It was an excellent selection and I would recommend it to any parent, Jewish or otherwise!



Hebrew School Literacy Project

by David Strassler

I had a vision:

- That all our Hebrew School families would have a house full of Jewish books to read, use as resources and to share.
- That our students would see an important part of their Jewish identity included in their home.

We are, as you know, the "People of the Book". So I wanted to get this collection off to a good start. The Sam L. Cohen Foundation has made this "Literacy Project" a reality. Each new families will get a copy of these three books. Next year, those families still enrolled in Hebrew School will get the next three books.

I would like to thank those who have made recommendations for books, and I am always open to new ideas.



Four Seasons Lodge

Director: Andrew Jacobs

Country: U.S., 2008

Duration: 96 min.

Language: English

This program is free and open to the public on a first come, first served basis.

Four Seasons Lodge follows a group of Holocaust survivors during what might be their final summer together at a bungalow colony in the Catskill mountains. Directed by New York Times journalist Andrew Jacobs with beautiful cinematography, the film explores the power of friendship and the drive to find joy despite painful memories.

It is a counter intuitive Holocaust documentary: a fusion of ribald humor, stories of unimaginable loss, the last of the Borscht Belt crooners, and a family made entirely of friends and lovers. The characters dance, flirt, and fight as the fate of their community hangs in the balance.

To view the trailer, visit

www.fourseasonsthemovie.com

Matthew Lavine, the film's producer will be present for an after film Q&A.

For more information, call 831-7495.

This year, the Literacy Project gave 17 Hebrew School families these books:

The Blessing Of A Skinned Knee by Wendy Mogel

The Art of Jewish Cooking by Jennie Grossinger

The Jewish Home: A Guide for Jewish Living by Daniel B. Syme.

Kosher for Passover Wine & Appetizer Tasting



by David Kurtz

For the fourth year, it was my great pleasure to help facilitate the Congregation Etz Chaim Kosher-for-Passover Wine Tasting. It's really one of the highlights of my year. I choose the wines, which allows me to buy wines I'd never be able to buy myself. Then I get to act as wine-snob-in-residence at the tasting. Really, what more can one ask for? I also get to have a glass of wine in the same room where I once had Hebrew School. This is a pleasure that cannot be overemphasized.

I was very pleased with the way the wine tasting came out this year. I counted dozens of people coming in the door, and met many people from outside of our "regular community". I saw many familiar faces of people I see only too infrequently, some only at our tastings!

Our wines were very different than in previous years. We decided that it was less important to show the wide diversity of the wines made in the Kosher world, as we had previously done. Tasting seventeen wines is hard to do, and then drive home afterwards. This year, we decided to go for less and better. Less wines, less diversity, but much higher quality all around. I am proud to say that I believe we succeeded in reaching this goal.

The wines came from eleven countries and five continents, with Israel greatly outnumbering any other location. Our average price-per-bottle was nineteen dollars, with one bottle costing over thirty dollars. And although price is no guaranteed indication of quality, I believe we got what we paid for.

I was impressed by this year's collection of wines. I thought some of the wines were eight kinds of delicious. I hope that others who attended felt the same. I know several people asked where to get our wines.



A few weeks earlier I had attended the 5th annual Return to Terroir tasting in New York. It focused entirely on biodynamic wines, held to the highest standard of organic farming practices imaginable. And it occurred to me: organic/biodynamic practices and Kosher practices are nearly identical. What has now been proposed as a radical agricultural program is really nothing that the Jews had not discovered thousands of years ago. No wonder the kosher wines are so tasty.

I would like to say Thank You to the Education Committee for letting me both help out and participate in this event. Fortunately, things seem to be going so well that I am looking forward to being back next year!

York County Jewish Community News

is published four or five times each year. It is intended to announce & report on Jewish community events in York County, and especially at Congregation Etz Chaim in Biddeford. It offers local perspectives on historical & contemporary aspects of Jewish life.

Beth Strassler, Editor

mail@etzchaimme.org

**If we have your email address,
you have been removed from the
snail mailing list. If you wish to
continue to receive a paper
newsletter, just write us.**

York County Jewish Community Calendar

May

- 2 & 16 Shabbat Services: 9:30 am
- 7: Last Day of HS Classes
- 8: Shabbat Potluck: 6 pm
- 14: HS Pizza Party: 3:45 - 5:14 pm
- 16: Sam Workman Bar Mitzvah
- 21: HS Teachers' Workshop: 3:45-6 pm
- 22: Teen Confirmation: 7 pm
- 30: Ben Wilson Bar Mitzvah

June

- 6: Harrison Milligan Bar Mitzvah
- 13: Shabbat Service: 9:30 am
- 20: No Shabbat Service

July

- 4 & 18 No Shabbat Service

August

- 1: No Shabbat Service
- 15: Tara Levy Bat Mitzvah

September

- 12: Hattie Simon Bat Mitzvah
- 18: Rosh Hashanah (Friday): 6:30 pm
- 19: RH (Sat): 9 am & 6:30 pm
Family Service: 11 am
- 20: RH (Sunday): 9 am only
Tashlich following AM service
- 27: Yom Kippur Eve (Sunday)
Kol Nidre: 6:15 pm
- 28: Yom Kippur (Monday): 9 am
Family Service: 11 am
Yitzkor: 11 am

Break Fast to follow evening service

October

- 1: Hebrew School begins